THE FOREST

JOHN GALSWORTHY

THE FOREST

THE WORKS OF

JOHN GALSWORTHY

FICTION

VILLA RUBEIN: AND OTHER STORIES
THE ISLAND PHARISEES
THE MAN OF PROPERTY
THE COUNTRY HOUSE
FRATERNITY
THE PATRICIAN
THE DARK FLOWER
THE FREELANDS
BEYOND
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SIX SHORT PLAYS

THE FOREST

A DRAMA IN FOUR ACTS

BY

JOHN GALSWORTHY

"Your own by tooth and claw, my boy.
Forest law."

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
1924

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PERSONS OF THE PLAY

Tregay . . .	War Correspondent
Adrian Bastaple .	Financier
Farrell . . .	His Confidential Man
Charles Stanforth .	Editor of a Liberal paper
Lord Elderleigh .	Nonconformist Peer
Pole Revers . .	Of the Foreign Office
Robert Beton . .	Imperialist
Baron Zimbosch .	Belgian
Samway . . .	Elephant-hunter
John Strood . .	Explorer
Herrick . . .	Naturalist
Captain Lockyer .	Members of Strood's Expedition
Dr. Franks . .	Members of Strood's Expedition
James Collie . .	Members of Strood's Expedition
Amina . . .	Half-caste Arab Girl
Samehda . . .	Her Brother
Sadig . . .	Strood's Berberine Servant
Mahmoud . . .	Soudanese Sergeant

Soudanese Soldiers, Carriers, Savages

Time: *End of Last Century*

CAST OF THE ORIGINAL PRODUCTION AT THE ST. MARTIN'S THEATRE, ON MARCH 6, 1924

TREGAY	By Mr. Nicholas Hannen
FARRELL	" Mr. J. H. Roberts
ADRIAN BASTAPLE	" Mr. Franklyn Dyall
LORD ELDERLEIGH	" Mr. A. Carlaw Grand
STANFORTH	" Mr. Campbell Gullan
POLE REVERS	" Mr. Felix Aylmer
ROBERT BETON	" Mr. Edward Irwin
BARON ZIMBOSCH	" Mr. Edward Rigby
JOHN STROOD	" Mr. Leslie Banks
SAMWAY	" Mr. William E. Hallman
HERRICK	" Mr. John Howell
AMINA	" Miss Hermione Baddeley
SADIG	" Mr. David Hallam
CAPTAIN LOCKYER	" Mr. Ian Hunter
DR. FRANKS	" Mr. H. R. Hignett
JAMES COLLIE	" Mr. Campbell Gullan
MAHMOUD	" Mr. Qwashie
SAMEHDA	" Mr. Felix Aylmer

ACT I

SCENE I. Bastaple's outer sanctum in the City of London. September 1898.

ACT II

SCENE I. Samway's Bungalow on the Albert Edward Nyanza. October.

SCENE II. A Native Hut on the West Bank of the Lualaba River. Christmas 1898.

SCENE III. The Same. Three days later.

ACT III.

SCENE I. Lockyer's Tent in the Forest, four marches from the Lualaba.

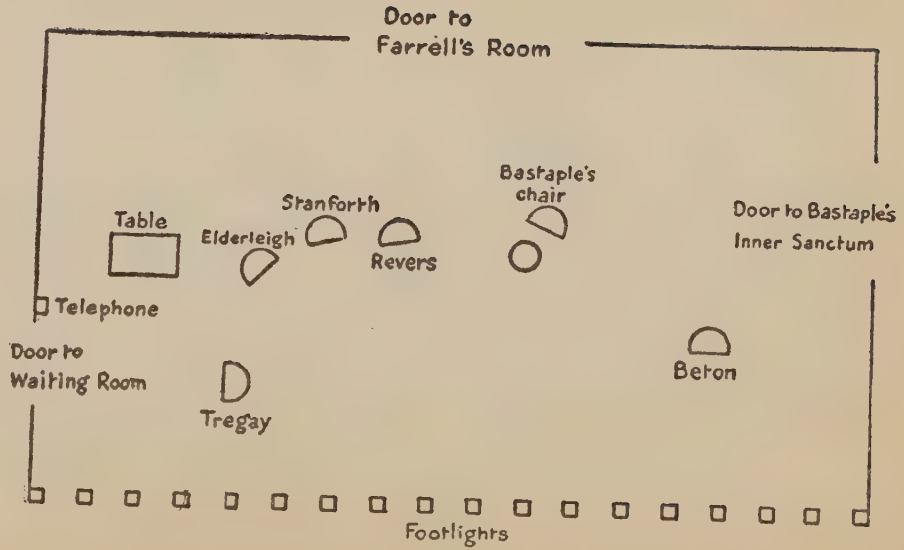
SCENE II. A clearing of the Forest, the following day.

ACT IV

SCENE I. Bastaple's outer sanctum. June 1899.

SCENE II. The Same. Four days later.

Note.—In this play none of the characters represent real persons, alive or dead. They are wholly imaginary. Nor are its history and geography entirely devoid of fancy.


Door to
Farrell's Room
Bastaple's
chair
Stanforth
Table
Elderleigh
Revers
Door to Bastaple's
Inner Sanctum
Telephone
Door to
Waiting Room
Beron
Tregay
Footlights

ACT I

The sanctum of Adrian Bastaple, in the City of London, furnished in the style of the nineties, solid and comfortable—living-room rather than office. On a small table centre is a box of cigars with a little spirit flame (as in tobacconists' shops) alight beside it. A door on the Left leads to an inner sanctuary. A door on the Right to a waiting-room; a door Back to the room of Farrell, Bastaple's confidential man. There is a telephone on the Right of the room.

As the curtain rises Farrell *enters from his room, ushering in* Tregay. Farrell *is perhaps forty-five; a rather small man with eyes that show a quick brain behind a mild and nervy manner. His face has the habit of little wandering smiles and quick upward looks.* Tregay *is a bronzed, upstanding man of forty, with a clipped fair beard, fine silky hair, and a face at once sanguine and sardonic.*

Tregay. Before my time, Mr. Farrell. Perhaps you can tell me what the deuce I've come for?

FARRELL. Your advantage, Mr. Tregay, I trust; sit down, sir.

It is noticeable that chairs have been arranged more or less in radiation from a deep arm-chair with the little table beside it.

TREGAY. Thought it might have been your chief's, Mr. Farrell; [*reversing a chair and sitting astride of it*] unless your City of London has changed its spots since I saw it last.

FARRELL. The City! Oh! no, sir. It doesn't change.

TREGAY. What's the latest financial circus? Haven't seen you since that Matabeleland racket, three years ago—in '95. How's Adrian Bastaple? Successful as ever?

FARRELL. [*With a nervous look at the sanctuary on the Left*] Oh! yes, sir—quite!

TREGAY. Well! Why have I been asked into the lion's den? 'Um!

FARRELL. [*With again a nervous look*] You've been away a long time, Mr. Tregay. China, was it?

TREGAY. And Peru. Good places to study finance while the blood flows. You should go yourself and see finance in flower—generally red!

FARRELL. A little hard on finance; necessary evil, Mr. Tregay, believe me—like—like manure.

TREGAY. Not bad! [*Pointing to the chairs*] Before they come, put me wise, as the Yanks say. What's Charles Stanforth doing in this galley? Adrian Bastaple and a Liberal Daily is not a marriage made in heaven. Any offspring so far?

FARRELL. Well, they're—they're expecting delivery to-day, sir.

TREGAY. What a little mongrel it'll be! Who else is coming to the ceremony?

[FARRELL *gives him one of his quick looks.*

FARRELL. Er—Lord Elderleigh.

TREGAY. Old Elderleigh of the Bible League? Ye gods! What's the next portent?

FARRELL. Mr. Robert Beton.

TREGAY. [*Absorbed*] Robert Beton? Empire and the Bible! Well, that's all right. Who else?

FARRELL. Mr. Pole Revers.

TREGAY. Foreign Office!

FARRELL. Oh! Not officially. Under the rose, sir.

TREGAY. You bet! Well, the ingredients are all there for some fine tummy upsets. Am I the bicarbonate of soda?

FARRELL. Didn't Mr. Stanforth tell you?

TREGAY. [*Shaking his head*] Just got a message to come here at five.

FARRELL. Perhaps I oughtn't——

TREGAY. Out with it, Mr. Farrell.

FARRELL. Well, sir, your experience of Africa, and your reputation for lost causes——

TREGAY. Adrian Bastaple and a lost cause! Something's got loose!

FARRELL. Oh! no! Mr. Bastaple has quite set his heart——

TREGAY. Then there's money in it?

FARRELL. No, sir, a pure matter of benevolence.

[*One of his looks.*

TREGAY. Now I think of it, I *have* seen his name in charity lists.

FARRELL. You have, sir—I see to that.

TREGAY. Ah! No limit to the things you do for him. Proud position, Mr. Farrell. What's the pure benevolence this time?

FARRELL. I'm sure it'll have your sympathy, sir; it's—the slave trade.

TREGAY. What! in the British Empire?

FARRELL. [*With a smile*] Oh! no, sir—oh! no!

TREGAY. Where then?

FARRELL. Congo.

TREGAY. But the Belgians rousted them out a year or two ago.

FARRELL. Well—[*with one of his looks*] yes. [*The door on the Left is opened*] Here is Mr. Bastaple. Mr. Tregay, sir.

TREGAY *rises from the chair he has been riding, and, reversing it, bows to the advancing figure.* ADRIAN BASTAPLE *is a man with a thick trunk and rather short neck, iron-grey hair once dark, subfusc, rather olive complexion, and heavy-lidded eyes with power in them. He may be sixty-five, and wears a frock coat and a dark cravat of the nineties, with a pearl pin. He speaks without accent, but with a slight thickness of voice, as if he were lined with leather.*

BASTAPLE. Mr. Tregay. Pleased to meet you.

Farrell, cigars. Smoke cigars, Mr. Tregay? [*Taking the box from* Farrell] Light up.

Tregay. [*Taking one and lighting it*] Thank you! [*Reading the label, with a quizzical look at Bastaple*] Divinos!

Farrell, *after a look from one to the other, goes back to his room.*

Bastaple. When did you get back?

Tregay. Yesterday.

Bastaple. Interesting time?

Tregay. Very.

Bastaple. Fine life a war correspondent's.

Tregay. When you don't live it, Mr. Bastaple.

Bastaple. [*With a steady look*] I enjoy your writing, those Boxers that got messed up at that river—very powerful. Not much light in China, I think?

Tregay. Not much light anywhere.

Bastaple. What are you doing now you're back?

Tregay. Time to smell Piccadilly, and I shall be at the service of the angels of light.

Farrell. [*Entering*] Lord Elderleigh, sir; Mr. Stanforth.

Tregay. Talk of—, and you hear——

Lord Elderleigh *is a white-bearded, pink-faced person, short and bird-like, with a quick step and turn of the head;* Charles Stanforth *a polished looking man between forty and fifty.*

Elderleigh, Mr. Bastaple?

[*He extends half a hand.*

STANFORTH. Ah! Tregay. You got my message then. [*He shakes hands with* TREGAY.] Glad you're back safe and sound.

BASTAPLE. Sit down, gentlemen. Cigars, Farrell.

He himself sits in the armchair by the small table. They all seat themselves. LORD ELDERLEIGH *has refused to smoke;* STANFORTH *has lighted one of his own cigarettes.*

ELDERLEIGH. I hope we're going to clinch things to-day, Stanforth. Time's getting on.

FARRELL. [*From the doorway*] Mr. Pole Revers.

POLE REVERS *is quick, tall, dark, and a bit of a dandy. He bows to* BASTAPLE, *nods to* STANFORTH *and* LORD ELDERLEIGH, *stares at* TREGAY, *and takes a chair.*

FARRELL. [*From the doorway*] Mr. Robert Beton.

He stands watching the company a moment. BETON *comes in, filling the eye with his large head on a short body and the breadth of his forehead. His eyes have power—epileptic eyes, seeing visions. He takes the end chair to the left of* BASTAPLE.

BETON. How do, my lord? How do, Stanforth? Revers, yours.

[FARRELL *goes.*

BASTAPLE. [*Introducing*] Mr. Tregay.

BETON *leans forward, staring, and makes an amicable movement of the hand at Tregay.*

BETON. Ah! Mr. Tregay, glad to meet you. I suggested your name to Mr. Stanforth. You know a Dr. Franks, I believe?

TREGAY. Franks! Clement Franks? My cousin—Out at Mombasa.

BETON. Exactly! You know what we're here for?

TREGAY. Limelight on the slave trade, is it?

BETON. Yes. Your cousin suggested you could help to throw it.

STANFORTH. East of the Congo, Tregay. You were out there in '94, wasn't it?

[TREGAY *nods.*

STANFORTH. Well, since then the Belgians have had two campaigns. But we're convinced the job's only been half done.

ELDERLEIGH. What's that country like, Mr. Tregay?

TREGAY. Forest thick as the city of London, my lord; fever—cannibals—all the luxuries.

STANFORTH. Quite; but we Liberals feel——

TREGAY. That you want a war-cry.

[STANFORTH *turns on him a stony stare.*

ELDERLEIGH. Mr. Beton, you spoke of having a man; is he ready?

BETON. At Mombasa, waiting for the word "Go." John Strood.

REVERS. Strood! H'm!

STANFORTH. The man who discovered——?

REVERS. Not too savoury, that, Beton.

BETON. Well, he's right for this business, it's

no child's play. Will the F.O. let him through Uganda? That's what we want to know from you, Revers.

REVERS. [*To* TREGAY] Where must he start from to get among the slavers?

TREGAY. Albert Edward Nyanza—south end.

BETON. That's what he says himself.

REVERS. What's said here goes no further? [*He looks for signs of assent, which are given to him*] Uganda's still very disturbed, but I don't think the authorities will hinder a reconnaissance with such an object. Discretion though, our hands are full.

ELDERLEIGH. Beton, you can—what's that nice expression?—tip him the wink, eh?

[BETON *nods.*

Good! Now—ways and means? Our League will venture a thousand. What will your paper do, Stanforth?

STANFORTH. Two thousand.

ELDERLEIGH. I'm afraid it'll cost more.

BETON. Mr. Tregay? An expedition starting from the Albert Edward covering country between the lakes and the Upper Congo, or Lualaba river, don't they call it?

TREGAY. [*Nodding*] About the size of Spain.

BETON. Well? What do you say?

TREGAY. Ten thousand'll be under the mark before you've done.

ELDERLEIGH. Dear me! Ten thousand! Well, for such a cause—— [*Looking at* BETON.

BETON. Idealism will put up three. What says Finance? [*He turns to* BASTAPLE.

BASTAPLE. [*Taking his cigar from his mouth*] I asked you to come here, gentlemen, at Mr. Beton's suggestion. You'll forgive a little frankness. [*During the forthcoming he looks mainly at* TREGAY] Financiers are never credited with doing anything for nothing. Admit it! We all have our own fish to fry. Lord Elderleigh fries the devil; Mr. Stanforth the Tories.

STANFORTH. Same thing.

BASTAPLE. Mr. Revers fries the virtue of neighbouring States, and Mr. Beton—fries his dreams. That leaves me. Well! I'd like to fry my reputation a little, gentlemen. I'd like a little kudos—I put up—ten thousand.

[*There is a moment's silence.*

TREGAY. [*Taking his cigar from his mouth*] Bravo!

ELDERLEIGH. Very generous, sir; very generous indeed. Will you put that in writing for us?

BASTAPLE. Glad to see religion has a sense of business, my lord.

ELDERLEIGH. Grievous experience, Mr. Bastaple. Well, that takes a weight off our minds. We can go ahead, then.

STANFORTH. Do we accept Strood?

REVERS. Properly warned.

BETON. Certainly.

REVERS. Then you want us to cable Mombasa

to give them a pass through Uganda to the Albert Edward.

BETON. That's it.

ELDERLEIGH. Would Mr. Tregay go out for us too? There couldn't be a stronger pen to bring things home to the British public.

TREGAY. What do you want brought home, my lord?

ELDERLEIGH. My dear Mr. Tregay, the truth.

TREGAY. Will *your* people pay two thousand, Stanforth, to be told the truth?

STANFORTH. What do you mean?

TREGAY. Suppose the Belgians are doing their best?

STANFORTH. We mustn't fall foul of the Belgians, of course; but this blind eye of theirs towards the slave trade——

TREGAY. Both ways—I see; true Liberalism.

[*Again* STANFORTH *turns on him a stony stare.*

BETON. [*To* TREGAY] Do you know Strood?

[TREGAY *nods.*

What d'you think of him?

TREGAY. Drives things through; but not Stanley's hold on the black man.

BETON. Ah! But Stanley! Stanley! Well, then I can set Strood in motion? [*He rises, and all follow suit*] I'll cable him fully, and draw on you, Bastaple?

BASTAPLE *nods, and there is a general break up.*

Mr. Tregay, your address is——?

TREGAY. [*Hands him a card; then advancing—rather low*] Good-bye, Mr. Bastaple. Fine investment!

BASTAPLE *stares at him steadily.* TREGAY *follows the others out.*

BETON. [*Coming from the door*] Now then, Bastaple!

[BASTAPLE *reseats himself at the little table.* We've got 'em side-tracked.

BASTAPLE. Long and expensive way round, Mr. Beton.

BETON. Can't be helped. Our coolie labour scheme is the only thing to make quick development possible in Africa. And it won't stand a dog's chance if the unco' guid aren't already employed elsewhere in bettering their neighbours. They started this anti-slavery racket themselves by God's own mercy! Old Elderleigh and brisk salvation; Stanforth and his precious principles. Yes, Bastaple, I've got my dreams. Stanley used to say that central forest of his reminded him of London—the swarm and push, the struggle for mere existence, the frightful riot of vitality without aim or end, but a fight for food and light and air. [*Walking*] Well, like him, in the early mornings I've watched the swarms of human ants coming in over these bridges—pale, overworked, dwarfed, stoop-shouldered—the ghastly, teeming struggle of it! [*Standing still*] By God, Bastaple, it makes you dream, it gives you nightmare. And all those great spaces in South Africa, Canada, Australia, that want populations, white

populations, where people can live a man's life, not a louse's! And fellows like Elderleigh, Stanforth, and their kidney—if we hadn't got this slave-trade red herring to draw across the trail, the hullabaloo they'd raise over my coolie scheme.

BASTAPLE. When's your General Meeting of South African Concessions?

BETON. Next July—we've got ten months. Strood will do it for us, if we hurry him. We'll have this anti-slavery campaign in full blast.

BASTAPLE. Wait till the very morning of the Meeting, then plump Strood's report on the slave trade into the papers. If it's sensational enough, the coolie scheme will go through and not a dog bark.

BETON. That's it, Bastaple, that's it. [*Off in his dreams*] A real life for hundreds of thousands of these poor struggling devils here, who turn me sick to look at them.

BASTAPLE. [*Watching him*] You will die a great man, Mr. Beton.

BETON. Well, look at this country, Bastaple. "Nothing so ugly in forest nature as the visible selfish rush towards the sky, in a clearing . . . the uproar of the rush, the fierce, heartless jostling and trampling." The life of that forest of Stanley's, Bastaple, is our big city life.

[BASTAPLE *has a little smile on his face.*

Ah! to you that's "all me eye and Betty Martin"; I know, I know. Flim-flam—that about your reputation—eh? Well? Once get coolie labour, and up

go the shares of all our companies, with a bound, sir, with a bound.

BASTAPLE. Our friend Tregay?

BETON. What about him?

BASTAPLE. [*Shaking his head*] Mustn't go out. He's got a nose!

BETON. H'm! They seem to want him to.

BASTAPLE. Leave that to me. Do you use a code with Strood?

[BETON *nods.*

And trust him?

BETON. Certainly.

BASTAPLE. Is he an Empire man?

BETON. Rather!

BASTAPLE. Then code him that he needn't mind treading on the Belgians' toes. The more fuss the better. Nothing like the sins of your neighbours for diverting attention from your own.

BETON. [*With a laugh*] I don't admit sin.

BASTAPLE. Never yet met anyone who did. *I'll* cable Strood credit at Mombasa. If we want speed, we must pay for it. [*He writes. Then looking up*] Mr. Beton, I find these dreams of yours very interesting. The struggle for existence! So you think we can improve on Nature?

BETON. I remember my boyhood, Bastaple. My father left six of us in Glasgow without a penny, and jungle there as thick as here. I went out with my little billhook and cut a path—we all did. But we suffered. Until I was nigh on forty I did as I was told, and it didn't suit me. Food I got, but

light and air—no. Well, I've shot up among the tops, into the sunlight; but I haven't forgotten. I want to save thousands of boys such as I was, want them to have decent lives. What was your boyhood like?

BASTAPLE. [*With a slow puff of smoke*] Never had one.

BETON. Ah! One feels there's a lot behind you. You're a kind of mystery man. Well, I'm going to code that cable. Here's Tregay's address. [*He hands the card*] I don't thank you; it's as much your interest as mine. Without coolie labour the shares can't rise. Good-night!

BASTAPLE. [*Holding out his hand*] Cigar?

BETON. No, thanks.

He shakes the outstretched hand and goes out, Back.

BASTAPLE *sinks deeper in his chair, with a smile flickering about his lips and his brooding eyes. He strikes a bell on the little table.* FARRELL *enters.*

BASTAPLE. What's my total holding now in all the companies of South African Concessions?

FARRELL. Three hundred and fifty-seven thousand shares, sir.

BASTAPLE. Standing me—in——?

FARRELL. Three hundred and twelve thousand pounds.

BASTAPLE. How many in my name?

FARRELL. About a hundred thousand, sir; the rest are in dummies.

BASTAPLE. I want them *all* in dummies, Farrell, except—twenty thousand. Get that done quietly, before Christmas.

FARRELL. Yes, sir.

BASTAPLE. Baron Zimbosch here yet?

FARRELL. In the waiting-room, sir.

BASTAPLE. [*Nodding*] Ask him in.

FARRELL. [*Goes to the door, Right, opens it, and says*] Will you come in, Baron?

BARON ZIMBOSCH *enters; a personable man with a brown beard parted in two and stiffish hair. He wears a frock-coat and carries a top hat.*

FARRELL *shuts the door and retires to his own room.*

BASTAPLE. Evening, Baron.

ZIMBOSCH. [*In goodish English with a slight accent*] Good evening, Mr. Bastaple.

BASTAPLE. What news for me?

ZIMBOSCH. [*With a shrug*] Well—for anything precise it is too early in the morning as you say. But Dr. Leyds is active—my hat! He is active.

BASTAPLE. Well! What of that?

ZIMBOSCH. [*Sinking his voice*] War, Mr. Bastaple, war.

BASTAPLE. Phew! That's a long jump.

ZIMBOSCH. You think? Dr. Leyds gives Kruger always the impression that Europe is favourable to the Boers. These Hollanders they lead him by the nose. Oom Paul Kruger—they play with that obsti-

nate old man. And they want war, these Hollanders. And Majuba, Mr. Bastaple—the English have never forgotten Majuba—they never will till they wipe the eye. And the Uitlanders—will they get what they want from Paul Kruger? Not much. About this time next year, Mr. Bastaple—war, or I am a Dutchman, as you say.

BASTAPLE. Old Kruger's too slim. What chance have the Boers, Baron?

ZIMBOSCH. Mr. Bastaple, the Englishman never sees his enemy—he eats too much fog and Yorkshire puddin'—so he is never ready. What Englishman believes he is at war till he 'as been beaten three or four time? Then he begins to scratch his head and say, "Dear me, there is a war on!"

BASTAPLE. And how do you Congo people view it?

ZIMBOSCH. [*With one of his expressive shrugs*] If you lose South Africa, we get what we want from the Boers; they will 'ave more than they want themselves; anyway, your 'ands are full for a long time. In both case we stand in velvet, as you call it.

BASTAPLE. Well, Baron, I think you're riding before the hounds, as we say; but I'm obliged to you. Keep me well informed about Dr. Leyds.

ZIMBOSCH. [*Bowing*] And for our steamers, Mr. Bastaple, you will help our scheme?

BASTAPLE. I see nothing against it at present, Baron; on the contrary.

ZIMBOSCH. *Bien!* We shall bring you the figures, then.

BASTAPLE. Cigar? [*Rings the bell.*

ZIMBOSCH. Divinos! Ah! So excellent! [*Taking and lighting it*] Good-evening, Mr. Bastaple. Good evening! [*He is ushered out by* FARRELL.

BASTAPLE. [*Brooding in his chair*] The beggar's right. [*He rings the bell again.*

[FARRELL *enters.*

Farrell, take down this letter to Mr. Beton.

[*Dictating.*

"Dear Mr. Beton,

"Thinking things over, I conceive despatch of the utmost importance. The less time, the less chance of a slip. Please advance your General Meeting of South African Concessions to early June at latest; and impress on Strood that we *must* have something to go on before the end of May. I hope he is a man who reads between the lines—something adequate, no matter whose toes are trodden on.

"Believe me, dear Mr. Beton,

"Yours faithfully."

[FARRELL *has taken it down in shorthand.*

BASTAPLE. Farrell, *if necessary* buy shares in all the Companies of South African Concessions sufficient to keep prices steady till the General Meeting in June.

FARRELL. My limit, sir?

BASTAPLE. You may raise my holding to half a million shares—not in my name.

FARRELL. No, sir. As to Press enquiries?

BASTAPLE. Discourage pessimism and all rumours of serious trouble with the Boers.

FARRELL. [*With his quick look up*] Very good, sir.

He is going away when BASTAPLE *turns in his chair and speaks sharply.*

BASTAPLE. Farrell!

FARRELL. Sir?

BASTAPLE. What's the general impression of me in the City? After twenty-five years you ought to know.

FARRELL. [*Deprecating*] Well, sir——

[*His eyes in play.*

BASTAPLE. Am I a mystery man?

FARRELL. [*Relieved*] Oh! very much so, sir.

BASTAPLE. In what way?

FARRELL. [*Deprecating*] Well, speculation about your beginnings, sir; curiosity as to your—er—general game. Some think——

BASTAPLE. Yes, Farrell?

FARRELL. Think you're after political power, sir; others that you aim at a peerage. I have heard, sir, that you were a—a Jew and want to buy the Holy Land. But then, I've heard too that you've got a Christian grudge against Rothschilds, and the object of your life is to give them a big knock.

BASTAPLE *is listening with a smile, and seeing this smile,* FARRELL *is beginning to enjoy himself.*

Beehive for rumour, sir, the City.

BASTAPLE. What else?

FARRELL. I've heard you called a great man, sir; and I've heard you called—er——

BASTAPLE. Yes?

FARRELL. A great scoundrel, if you don't mind, sir. Mr. Tregay, for instance—named this the lion's den. [*Without animus*] He didn't call me the jackal, but he wanted to.

BASTAPLE. That reminds me, Tregay mustn't go out.

FARRELL. No, sir? Stop him with——?

BASTAPLE. A club, if you can't think of anything softer.

FARRELL. [*With a snigger*] Would a cable from Mombasa—saying he'd be too late?

BASTAPLE. If you can get it.

FARRELL. Oh! I can get it, sir.

BASTAPLE. Good! What else about me?

FARRELL. Well, sir, a whole lot say you're just a gambler on a huge scale. And there's one man got the fixed idea you've a passion for philanthropy. Everything with a bit of romance to it goes in the city of London.

BASTAPLE. And what do *you* think, Farrell?

FARRELL. [*With his look up*] Well, sir—I never think about the—origin of species.

BASTAPLE. Oh! yes, you do. Come along!

FARRELL. [*Taking hold of himself*] Perhaps you wouldn't like, sir——

BASTAPLE. Risk that.

FARRELL. I don't take the romantic view. No,

sir. Great gifts, great energy—trained in a hard school, whatever it was.

[*He stops with his quick look up.*

BASTAPLE. Go on, Farrell.

FARRELL. I don't believe you have an object, sir, nor a passion. It's—it's—you couldn't stop yourself—that's all about it. Beg your pardon, sir—it's only a private view; I never mention it.

BASTAPLE. Romance useful, eh?

FARRELL. Of course, I've always admired your coolness and resource, and your never being turned by any little—er——

BASTAPLE. Yes, Farrell?

FARRELL. [*Drying up*] I'm sure, sir, I had no intention of giving an opinion. [*Edging towards the door.*

BASTAPLE. Come here!

FARRELL *comes to the table and* BASTAPLE *looks up into his face.*

For a quarter of a century you've deserved my confidence, so far as I know. I hope you always will.

FARRELL. You're very good, sir; I'm sure I want to —I feel——

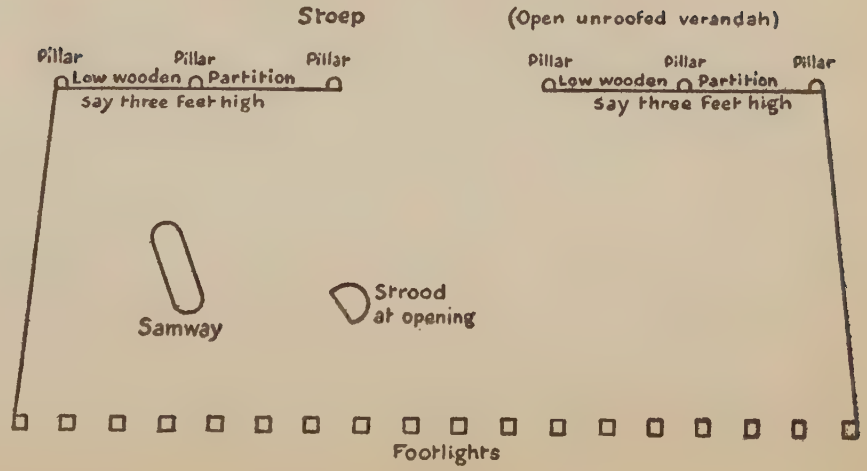
BASTAPLE. [*Staring at him a moment*] Thank you, Farrell. Send off this cable to Mombasa. [*He hands the cable to* FARRELL] And give me the map of Africa.

[FARRELL *is getting the atlas as*

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT II

BACKCLOTH WITH VIEW OF LAKE



ACT II

SCENE I

The scene is the shack of SAMWAY, *the elephant-hunter, on the south shore of the Albert Edward Nyanza. A room divided only by a low wooden partition from a stoep, or low, roofless verandah, seen through the opening at back.*

In long chairs, with drinks and pipes, STROOD *and* SAMWAY *are seated;* STROOD *has a map on his lap,* SAMWAY'S *left leg is bandaged.*

SAMWAY. [*Lean, brown, bearded*] Well, Mr. Strood, you sure did hustle. No man could have come through from the coast quicker.

STROOD. From Beton's cables, Samway, what they're really after is trouble with the Belgians. [*Putting his finger on the map*] They want that Katanga region coloured red, and so do I.

SAMWAY. All one to me what darned flag flies.

STROOD. The slave trade's a stale pretext.

SAMWAY. [*After a shrewd glance, holding up a little leather bag which he has taken out of his pocket*] If you want to stir mud—see this!

STROOD *stares at him.* SAMWAY *tosses the bag to him, and he undoes it and stares at the contents.*

SAMWAY. Yes, sir—diamonds; not very large, but plenty where those come from. Fetch me over that map.

STROOD rises, spreads it on SAMWAY'S *knee, and stands behind him, ready to follow* SAMWAY'S *finger.*

Down here [*putting his finger on the map*] between the Kasai river and the Luembe, there's diamonds—all over that country—and no one knows of them but me and one Belgian. Last I heard of that fellow, he was gettin' busy at Basoko with an expedition to go south. He's after them diamonds. Now, get there first, make a discoverer's claim, and keep some founders' shares for me. How's that for making trouble?

He looks quizzically up at STROOD, *who has raised himself and is staring before him—a face brown and sanguine, a jaw of iron.*

STROOD. [*Shaking his head*] Clean away from instructions, Samway.

SAMWAY. Nothing like diamonds to raise brotherly love. It'd make all the fuss they want sure enough.

STROOD. H'm! [*Looking at* SAMWAY'S *leg*] Why did you go and get your leg chawed up like that?

SAMWAY. [*Pointing to a lion skin*] Ask that guy there.

STROOD. Anyone here who knows that country besides you?

SAMWAY. Not a mother's son.

STROOD. Nyangwe on the Lualaba was my limit. How many weeks from there?

SAMWAY. [*Tracing on map*] Say 350 miles as the crow flies—and I guess the darned fowl flies straighter in Africa than anywhere else; six to seven hundred miles of marching; through Batetela country, too.

STROOD. Mine's too small a caravan for that!

SAMWAY. Yeh! Those Batetela are a worse set of varmints than the Manyema—by golly, they are! They got the poison trick bad. When they hit you you sure die. An' they eat you after.

STROOD. How did *you* get through them, then?

SAMWAY. We—ell! Friend of mine has almighty power in those parts—son of one of those old Zanzibar slavers that the Belgians chawed up in '92; does a bit on his own still.

STROOD. Have you a pull on him?

SAMWAY. Why, yes—this Samehda was in trouble with a lion when we was huntin' there; I took care of the lion, so we kind of made blood-brotherhood. Brought his sister, too, back up here with me, to get her eyes cured—nearly blind, she was—quite a local beauty; she's livin' with Herrick now.

STROOD. What! That naturalist?

SAMWAY. Yeh. Devoted to him; spaniels round him all the time. Strikin' figure, Herrick.

STROOD. Unsociable devil.

SAMWAY. He certainly has mighty little use for anyone, s'long as he can watch his monkeys. [*An idea strikes him.*] See here, Mr. Strood!

STROOD. Well?

SAMWAY. Between the Lualaba and Lake Tanganyika there's a brand of chimpanzee that Herrick's just got to chum with, to finish his book on the Central African monkey. Take him and his girl along; she'll fix her brother for you.

STROOD. On a trip like mine?

SAMWAY. Hard bit o' goods; go all day, and all night too.

STROOD. [*Shaking his head*] Women!

SAMWAY. You won't get hold of Samehda without her. And that belt between the Lualaba river and the Lomami river is the darnedest bit of country God ever spat out—forest and marsh and Batetela cannibals savage as hell.

STROOD. [*Taking another turn or two*] Time, Samway—time! I've got to send them news before the end of May.

SAMWAY. Reach Samehda, and you'll have plenty news of slavery. Kill two birds with one stone, there.

STROOD. Would Herrick go?

SAMWAY. Crazy to meet that chimpanzee.

STROOD. [*Suddenly*] Could you get him here?

SAMWAY, Sure.

STROOD *strikes his hands together, and* SADIG, *his Berberine servant, appears from the verandah.*

SAMWAY. Go to Mr. Herrick. Samway wants palaver say.

[*Sadig goes.*

Mind! If you let on where you're going, you'll

lose your carriers. They're scared to death of them Batetela.

STROOD. [*Nodding*] How long can I reckon on—before that Belgian?

SAMWAY. Why! He'll be all of five months by the road he'll go.

STROOD. By the Lord, Samway, I'll have a try!

SAMWAY. That's great! But pack your halo; you'll have to drive your crowd.

STROOD. Mustn't I tell my white men?

SAMWAY. Not safe. Let 'em think there's nothing beyond your original plan—to hunt up what's left of the slave trade. When are you scheduled to start?

STROOD. Day after to-morrow.

SAMWAY. Well! Forced marches play the devil. I don't hold with beatin' niggers, but take a sjambok; you'll need it.

STROOD. [*Smiling*] This isn't a land for the chicken-livered, Samway.

SAMWAY. Well, there's been travellers here who never raised a hand, but I judge they didn't live long.

STROOD. Where does Herrick hail from?

SAMWAY. New Zealand. Independent as a jack rabbit.

STROOD. Bad man to take, Samway. An expedition like this has to be all of a piece, in the leader's hand.

SAMWAY. Well, it's the girl or nothing; and she won't go without him.

A tall man, lean and dark, with a good deal of hair, a pointed beard and deep, remarkable eyes, has come on to the stoep.

SAMWAY. Evening, Mr. Herrick!

HERRICK. [*Advancing*] Evening to you. How's the leg?

SAMWAY. It kind of feels complimented when you call it that. Know Mr. Strood?

HERRICK. [*With a slight bow*] Yes.

STROOD. Good-evening.

SAMWAY. Mr. Herrick, we was talkin' about that chimpanzee the other evenin'.

HERRICK. Marungensis variety. Well?

SAMWAY. Mr. Strood is goin' into the home of that gentleman. Thought maybe you'd like to ask him to get you a specimen. Your girl comes from there. You don't talk to her about critters, I guess, or she might 'a' told you.

HERRICK. I want to see the fellow living, Samway.

STROOD. Like to come with us, Mr. Herrick?

HERRICK. What? [*Surprised*] How long are you to be away?

STROOD. Seven months or so with luck.

SAMWAY. Take your girl; she'll be useful there, I tell you.

HERRICK. Amina? No.

SAMWAY. [*Quizzically*] You won't be two days out before she'll be with you. That's the worst of these half-Arab girls. Never let 'em get fond of you or they'll follow you like a dog.

HERRICK. Could I leave her with you, Samway?

SAMWAY. [*With a secret glance at* STROOD] What'll *she* say to that? Call her in. I judge she'll be around.

HERRICK. Amina!

Instantly the GIRL *walks in from the stoep. A fine figure, veiled, not very dark in colour, with black eyes fixed on* HERRICK, *quite ignoring the other men.*

AMINA. [*She stands just inside the room with her eyes on* HERRICK] You want me?

HERRICK. Listen. I go a journey—six months I leave you with Mr. Samway.

AMINA. [*After a moment's silence*] No—no! I come.

SAMWAY. [*Grinning*] What! Amina! Won't you stay with me?

AMINA. No. Go with Herrick.

[*She crosses swiftly and puts his hand to her forehead.*

SAMWAY. See that, Mr. Strood? You'll have to take her, I reckon.

AMINA. [*With a swift look at the two men, and some instinctive comprehension*] Ya, Mist' Strood, take me with Herrick; I know forest. Good traveller, Mist' Samway—not?

SAMWAY. Sure, you are!

HERRICK. Amina, go home. I come directly. Hear me?

AMINA. I cook for you—know good water—make bandage—mend your clo'es—keep watch.

SAMWAY. Why not, Mr. Herrick? She's good on the road; she won't trouble you any.

HERRICK. [*Revolted at the thought of being the only man with a woman in all that crowd*] No. If she won't stay, I give up the idea. Good-night!

He turns from the GIRL *and goes out on to the stoep and away.*

SAMWAY. [*Sharply*] Amina!

[AMINA, *who is following* HERRICK, *stops.* Here!

AMINA. [*Going to* SAMWAY] Herrick angry.

SAMWAY. See here, my girl! Listen! Mr. Strood wants Herrick to go with him; understand?

[AMINA *looks at* STROOD, *who nods.* And *I* want to send salaam to your brother. Understand? Now, you do what I tell you. You let Herrick go; you stay, be good girl, obedient—let him go.

[AMINA *makes a movement of refusal.* Listen! I send you after him one day behind; you follow; you catch him in five days, not before; too far to send you back. Then he take you with him—see? Herrick's going after a monkey; he wants that monkey good. If he's got to stay here because of you, he'll certainly get mad with you. See?

AMINA. [*Looking deeply at him*] You—true?

SAMWAY. Sure!

AMINA. [*With a suspicious look at* STROOD] Why *he* want take Herrick?

SAMWAY. [*After a look at* STROOD; *to* AMINA] Herrick

write all about Mr. Strood—make much noise in white man's country; good for Herrick, good for Mr. Strood.

AMINA. [*To* STROOD] Why you not like Herrick?

STROOD. [*Taken aback*] I?

SAMWAY. You don't understand white men yet, Amina; they're not like Arabs. Mr. Strood and Herrick not friends and not enemies—all business. Now, will you do what I say or not?

AMINA. I go home. If Herrick angry at me, then I do what you say—stay behind—come to you, you send me follow. [*She touches her heart*] You friend to me, Mist' Samway. My brother love you good. So?

SAMWAY. So—it is.

She makes a gesture of salute to the two men and goes out.

SAMWAY. That's fixed it. He'll sure be riled, thinkin' of his chimpanzee. His mouth's waterin' after that critter. Cute, ain't she? These half-caste Arabs are deep. Simple, too. You may bet on—their gratitude; and you may bet on—their revenge.

STROOD. Not much nigger in that girl?

SAMWAY. Half Manyema. Their women are mighty handsome, and light-coloured. The father was pretty pure Arab.

From the stoep appears the white-clothed figure of a youngish, brown-skinned MAN.

STROOD. Well, Sadig?

SADIG. Cap'en Lockyer, Docker Franks, Missah Collie here, sah.

STROOD. Mind if I see them, Samway?

SAMWAY. Sure, no. Bring them right in.

LOCKYER, FRANKS, *and* COLLIE *enter from the stoep.* LOCKYER *is in tropical cloth;* FRANKS *and* COLLIE *in Holland drill.* LOCKYER *is soldierly, dry, and brown, with a small, fairish moustache and refined features.* FRANKS *is dark-haired and sallow-faced.* COLLIE, *a biggish man, has a good deal of roughish hair and moustache and rugged features. They greet* SAMWAY.

STROOD. Well, gentlemen, all ready? How are your men's feet, Captain Lockyer?

LOCKYER. None too sound, sir. I'd rather have had Bangalas. The Soudanese are bad stragglers, as Barttelot found.

STROOD. Can't make a soldier out of a Bangala under three months. How's your prospector's kit, Collie?

COLLIE. Ah've known worse, and—ah've known better.

STROOD. Well, if you never commit yourself beyond that, you won't disgrace the north of the Tweed. Through with the vaccinations, Doctor? [FRANKS *nods*] Got any of Parke's antidote for poisoned arrows?

FRANKS. Can't get it.

STROOD. Well, take plenty of ammonium car-

bonate. We start 4 a.m. sharp, day after to-morrow. I'm going to make long marches till we get to forest. See you keep 'em up to it. Got all the quinine you want, Dr. Franks? [FRANKS *nods*] Right! Look after your men's feet, Lockyer. I want to get to Manyema country quick. It's there we'll begin to find any slaving that's left. Anything to ask friend Samway?

LOCKYER. Are the Manyema active, Samway?

SAMWAY. Why! they take a Bank Holiday now and then, Captain. Don't let your men stray, or they'll end in the frying-pan.

FRANKS. [*To* STROOD] Are we going further south or west than Nyangwe?

STROOD. [*After exchanging a look with* SAMWAY] I don't know, Franks. The Belgians won't love us, so where exactly the job will take us, I can't tell. It's a roving commission.

[*He looks from one to another.*

LOCKYER. That's all right, sir.

[*The others nod.*

STROOD. Mr. Herrick may come with us, in search of a new sort of chimpanzee.

COLLIE. Losh! Aren't there enough monkeys in the world a'ready?

SAMWAY. We—ell! I judge we all want ancestors.

COLLIE. Aye! That's a morbid curiosity.

LOCKYER. I'd give all mine to know what's won the Leger.

STROOD. Well, gentlemen, stout hearts, prepared for anything, I hope.

COLLIE. I got a christenin' bottle here, Chief.

Produces a champagne bottle from his pocket and a corkscrew.

SAMWAY. [*To* SADIG, *who is standing at the back*] Glasses, boy!

SADIG. Missa Herrick come back, sah.

He takes the bottle and goes to fetch the glasses.

HERRICK *comes in, with the* GIRL *following.*

HERRICK. [*Looking round*] Evening to you!

SAMWAY. Thought it over, Mr. Herrick?

HERRICK. [*To* STROOD] If you really meant it, I'll come, and thanks for the chance.

STROOD. Glad to have you.

HERRICK. [*To* SAMWAY] She'll stay with you, Samway; if you'll be kind enough to look after her.

SAMWAY. [*Looking at* AMINA] Sure thing.

STROOD. One word, Mr. Herrick. You understand, of course, that you'll be under my orders, like these gentlemen. In this sort of trip the leader has to be an autocrat. It's queer country.

HERRICK *bows. The* GIRL, *standing with her arm raised, half hiding her face, looks intently at* STROOD. *The glasses have been brought, and handed round.*

SAMWAY. [*Raising his glass*] Gentlemen—safe return! Luck to you all!

STROOD. Samway—success! [*He drains his glass. The* GIRL *stands unmoving, looking from* STROOD *to* HERRICK.

Having emptied their glasses, FRANKS, LOCKYER, *and* COLLIE *go out on to the stoep.*

STROOD. [*Following*] A moment, Doctor.

He joins them on the stoep, and they pass away, talking. The GIRL *remains motionless, watching* HERRICK *and listening.*

HERRICK. [*Approaching* SAMWAY] Samway! Why don't I cotton to Strood?

SAMWAY. Strood and me have been in one or two mix-ups together, Mr. Herrick.

HERRICK. You know him all the better, then. Well?

SAMWAY. [*Smiling*] I judge Strood makes Gawd in his own image. Maybe that's the reason.

HERRICK. Sticks at nothing, you mean?

SAMWAY. You've gotten a habit of plain words. Well, he gets things done, whether in London City or an African forest.

HERRICK. I see.

SAMWAY. Old Man Allah 'll need a full flush to knock Strood out; he couldn't die to save his life.

HERRICK. Thanks. [*Lowering his voice*] The girl will be all right with you?

SAMWAY. So she don't run away. Can't lock her up.

HERRICK. If she can't have *me,* she won't leave *you.* Good-night!

He shakes SAMWAY'S *hand, and, beckoning to* AMINA, *goes out. The* GIRL *comes swiftly down to* SAMWAY.

SAMWAY. Well, Amina?

AMINA. You swear by Allah—I follow Herrick?

SAMWAY. By Allah!

AMINA. You friend to me—friend to my brother.

She leans forward, takes his hand and puts it to her forehead.

SAMWAY. That's right, Amina.

AMINA. I trust.

She rises and goes swiftly out to follow HERRICK, *just as* STROOD *comes in. He passes her with a stare, and she puts up her arm to cover her face. He stops, and stands looking at her.*

STROOD. Girl—understand! You obey me just as if you were a man.

AMINA. [*Keeping her arm up*] Obey Herrick.

STROOD. That's just what you don't do, it seems.

AMINA. Obey Herrick when I with him.

STROOD. And no tricks with any other man.

AMINA. [*Dropping her arm. Proudly*] Trick! I no play trick.

STROOD. All right! Remember!

AMINA. [*With a flash of eyes and teeth*] Yes. I remember.

He passes her. She stands looking intently back at him over her shoulder; then goes out.

SAMWAY. Queer critter, that girl. Knife you as soon as look. Don't get wrong with her.

STROOD. So long as she behaves; but she'll have

to toe the line like all the rest. What do you think of my crowd, Samway? Collie's a rough diamond; Franks knows his job. What about young Lockyer?

SAMWAY. English gentleman, I judge.

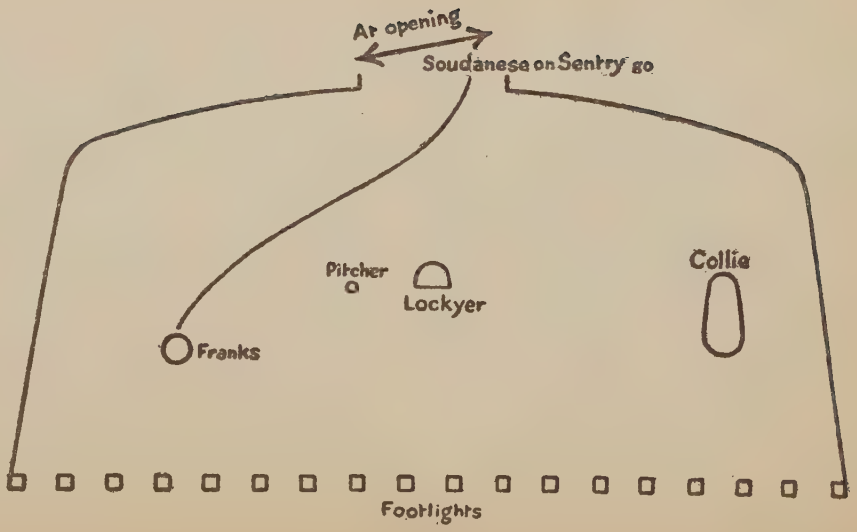
STROOD. That against him?

SAMWAY. Well, too many points of honour are liable to get him eaten in a country like that.

STROOD. [*With a laugh*] Now, Samway, write me that letter to the girl's brother; and tell me every last bit you know about the route—I'm going to get there.

He spreads the map, and they pore over it as

THE CURTAIN FALLS.


At opening
Soudanese on Sentry go
Pitcher
Lockyer
Collie
Franks
Footlights

SCENE II

Eight weeks later, on the west bank of the Lualaba river. Noon. A large native hut of the better type. Over an opening in the centre of the back wall some matting has been lifted, revealing trodden mud, undergrowth, high trees, and glimpses of river. The hut is of saplings and large leaves of the amoma tree, plastered inside with dried mud; it has conical roofing. There is nothing in the hut save white man's kit and mess-tins dumped here and there.

COLLIE, *wrapped in a blanket, lies asleep on the Left. He is recovering from a bout of fever. Centre,* LOCKYER, *with the remnants of soldierly neatness, in shirt and breeches, sits cross-legged on the ground writing up his log. A native pitcher stands on the floor close to him. Some clothes are stretched here and there to dry. A Soudanese* SENTRY, *with rifle, at long intervals crosses and recrosses the opening. Through the opening* FRANKS *enters. He has a growth of dark beard and is thin, stained, and haggard. He comes forward, takes up the pitcher and raises it to drink.*

LOCKYER. Steady on, Franks. It's not been boiled. Here!

[*He hands his water-bottle to* FRANKS, *who drinks.*

FRANKS. Your Soudanee is food for the crocodiles, Lockyer.

LOCKYER. Poor devil!

FRANKS. Ammonium carbonate hardly touches this brand of poison. The two carriers will die too —tetanus supervening.

He leans against the wall, Right, in an exhausted attitude, looking down at LOCKYER.

LOCKYER. How's the chief's fever?

FRANKS. Passed off. Strong as a bull. Now he's on his legs we shall be off again.

LOCKYER. Got fever yourself, haven't you?

[FRANKS *nods.*

Collie's temp.'s down. [*Shutting up his log*] Look here, old man, I'll go on guard. Lie down; if we're off again, you'll need a spell.

FRANKS. [*Fever mounting in him*] Lockyer, why have we crossed the Lualaba? Our job was to lie between this river and the Lakes. Eight hellish weeks getting here, and nothing done! No attempt to find slave trade—no trace of it. Driving—driving these poor wretches on. Six dead. Two more will die. Eight can't carry—can't march even—have to be left here; at least six more will founder when we start again. All forest in front. Forest again—my God! [*His voice has risen;* COLLIE *wakes and sits up*] What's Strood doing? Damn him!

LOCKYER. Steady, old son!

COLLIE. Physician, heal thaself! [*Rising*] Eh! but I'm feelin' fine again. Lie down, Franks; ye've no constitution. I told ye to get out of your wet togs last night.

FRANKS. With three men dying on my hands, and the chief cursing at every man we lose! He's playing some game we know nothing of. I've felt it all along. We can't go on like this; the men are skeletons. We *must* rest and feed them up.

COLLIE. If we rest, it's not ourselves we'll be feedin' up. Drums all night. We'll be attacked again directly.

LOCKYER. We gave them a pill yesterday, crossing the river.

COLLIE. Aye, but they're forgetfu' loons in this forest. [*As* FRANKS *crosses to the blankets*] I'm with the doctor; we want a reason for goin' on the way we are.

FRANKS. They can spare their arrows; we'll all founder in a fortnight, driven on like this. These stinking swamps!

He is seized with a violent fit of shivering. COLLIE *wraps him in a blanket, and almost forces him down against the wall, Left.*

The Soudanese SENTRY *stands to attention in the opening and speaks.*

SENTRY. Chief—come! Captain!

[*He grunts and is silent, at attention.*

STROOD *enters. The* SENTRY *moves on.* STROOD, *though lined and sallowed,*

has not lost, like the others, his look of physical strength. He has a revolver in his belt and a cloud on his face.

STROOD. Gentlemen—no officer on guard! Do you happen to remember we were attacked in crossing yesterday? Whose duty?

LOCKYER. I was just going, sir.

STROOD. "Just going" doesn't do, Captain Lockyer. Where's Herrick? Let *him* take his turn.

LOCKYER. We wanted to ask you, sir——

STROOD. [*Ominously*] Well?

LOCKYER. Why have we crossed the Lualaba? We understood——

STROOD. Thought you were a soldier.

LOCKYER. [*Steadily*] We consider the position pretty desperate, sir. We signed for an expedition between the Lakes and the Lualaba.

STROOD. You signed to be under my leadership for seven months. You have five months to run, Captain Lockyer, and your reputation in the Army at stake.

LOCKYER. I know that, sir. But you've crossed into cannibal country and the men are scared. We may have wholesale desertions.

STROOD. I've only flogged for desertion so far; I'll shoot the next man who tries it on. [*Grimly*] But there'll be no straggling between this river and the Lomami. Any straggler now is food for cannibals.

FRANKS. And if we *all* recross the river?

STROOD. [*Putting his hand on his revolver*] Dr. Franks!

LOCKYER. [*Quietly*] Franks has fever, sir. But we shall be grateful if you'll tell us the exact purpose for which the whole expedition is risking its life.

COLLIE. Aye, chief; is it a pure pleasure trip?

STROOD. [*Controlling himself*] Gentlemen, I've had to be on the safe side and keep my counsel, or lose my carriers. Well, we're on the safe side now. Our real destination is south, in the Lualaba Kasai.

[*Sensation.*

COLLIE. How's that?

STROOD. Diamonds. No one else knows of them but one Belgian. And we're racing his outfit from Basoko.

[FRANKS *laughs.*

COLLIE. Diamonds! Losh!

LOCKYER. We're not after the slave trade, then?

STROOD. Certainly. I'm expecting news of it hereabouts. But this other object is just as important.

LOCKYER. Frankly, sir, if I'd known this was a commercial expedition, I shouldn't have come.

STROOD. Commercial! You've heard of the copper deposits in Katanga? The south-east of the Congo State is a mass of minerals, gentlemen. It should never have been let slip. Samway's shown me the

diamonds he found further west. If we can make a discoverer's claim, it should lead to an alteration of the whole frontier, and add one of the richest bits of Africa to the British flag. Is that commercial, Lockyer?

LOCKYER. [*Steadily*] How do you mean, sir? A frontier once fixed——

STROOD. Frontiers are never fixed.

LOCKYER. If it's for the flag——

COLLIE. It's a bonnie idea.

STROOD. Worth a few lives and a few scruples!

FRANKS. Only twenty-six carriers can march at all—and six of *them* will founder in a day or two. Eight men can't march, and two are dying. What are you going to do with them?

STROOD. Put them and you, Dr. Franks, and Mr. Herrick, back across the river to camp until you're fit; then you will take them home the way we came, or to Tanganyika, as you find best. I hope to send news by you of the slave trade.

FRANKS. Slave trade! It's we're the slavers—driving on these men——

[*He laughs a disordered laugh.*

LOCKYER. Franks! . . . With only nine Soudanese, sir, and less than thirty carriers—all in bad shape; it's precious long odds against our getting through. We shall be attacked all the way.

STROOD. Why do you think I brought that girl of Herrick's?

LOCKYER. Yes, sir, why? She's a sullen little snake.

STROOD. Because she's sister to an Arab friend of Samway's, who rules these parts. From him—we shall get safe conduct to the Lomami, and more carriers if we need them.

LOCKYER. I see. That sounds good enough.

STROOD. Enough said, Lockyer. [*He holds out his hand, which* LOCKYER *takes*] Put Herrick on guard. I'm going to send the girl off now, with Samway's letter.

He looks grimly at FRANKS, *huddled in his blanket against the wall, and goes out.*

LOCKYER *takes belt, revolver, and stick, buckles on the belt, and stands looking at* FRANKS.

LOCKYER. Get a sleep, old chap.

He goes out, speaking to the SENTRY *in the entrance.* COLLIE *begins attending to the gear in the hut.*

FRANKS. [*Huddled on the floor, with knees drawn up*] Good fellow, Lockyer, but a fool, Collie. The Empire's built with the bones of fools like Lockyer.

COLLIE. [*Close to him*] Na, no! The Empire's built by men that's got an itch to measure theirsels against the impossible. Strood's a great man in his way.

FRANKS. Lockyer's worth ten of him.

COLLIE. Doctor, ye're no' just. There's not a square mile of civilised airth that hasn't had a Strood at work on it. But for your Stroods we'd all be savages. England was forest no' so verra long ago.

FRANKS. [*In the tone of one who utters an unimaginable word*] England!

COLLIE. [*Who is bending down*] Doctor, I'm eaten up wi' critters; the hut I slept in last night was fair crawlin' wi' 'em. [*He contemplates his stringy legs.*

FRANKS. [*Suddenly*] Driving on these poor devils —the skeletons we've made of them?

COLLIE. [*Humouring*] Well, ye can nurse 'em back home.

FRANKS. They'll never see home; the forest'll have their bones, and he knows it.

COLLIE. Aweel! [*Stretching*] Ah'd give ma conscience for the smell of whisky.

HERRICK *appears in the opening. He comes forward, impressively gaunt.*

HERRICK. Got the map?

COLLIE. Lockyer's told ye, then?

HERRICK. [*Nodding*] Cat's paws. [*Looking at the map*] Franks! We'll make for the Bambara Hills and Tanganyika when your men can march. Fever?

FRANKS *nods. He is now shivering violently.*

HERRICK. Pain? Across the back? Like an injection? [*He takes a little case from* FRANKS'S *pocket and prepares to inject*] Collie, yesterday, crossing the river, I caught a frog with unwebbed toes. He's got long, sharp claws. Now, doctor——

[*He injects.*

COLLIE. Grand stuff, opium! [*Pointing on the*

map] Losh! Those diamonds are a way off! Heard about your girl?

HERRICK. I have.

COLLIE. Will she go, d'ye think? She's no' friendly to Strood. Ma God, the way she looks at him! Aye, but it's a misfortune ye don't get on with Strood. There's a ween o' plans go wrong because o' personalities.

HERRICK. He's a bully.

COLLIE. [*Angrily*] Ah! you and the doctor! How would *you* get a caravan across this country? Ye'd never get beyond your front door.

HERRICK. [*To* FRANKS] Any easier?

FRANKS *nods. He is getting drowsy from the injection.*

COLLIE. Ye can't eat pie without cuttin' crust. It's the lives of niggers against the glories of trade and science. I'm thinkin' ye'd be best to go and sit down by the Round Pond, Herrick, and study the chimpanzee in Kensington Gardens—What's the trouble now?

[*Sounds of commotion without.*

Another of your men dead, doctor?

FRANKS *half raises himself, but droops again somnolently. The sounds of commotion increase.*

COLLIE. Aye, well! It's no' a God-fearin' parish this. [*He reaches for his revolver.*

HERRICK *steps towards the door, but stands aside to let* STROOD *pass in. He has a sjambok in his hands and looks furious.*

The Soudanese SENTRY *blocks the entry after him.*

STROOD. [*Halting at sight of* HERRICK] Do you know anything of this?

HERRICK. [*Haughtily*] Of *what?*

STROOD. Did you put your girl up to sneaking into my tent?

HERRICK. Don't treat me like your black men, Mr. Strood.

LOCKYER'S VOICE. Into the hut!

Four ragged Soudanese SOLDIERS *enter with the girl* AMINA *between them.* LOCKYER *follows. By his direction they open out, and, leaving the* GIRL *between* STROOD *and* HERRICK, *block the entrance. The* GIRL *stands quite still, but her eyes move and glitter dangerously.* STROOD *has recovered his self-command.*

STROOD. Lockyer—Collie—the letter from Samway to this girl's brother is missing from my tent since I was here a few minutes ago. Sadig there? Call him!

LOCKYER *looks out through the opening and beckons.* SADIG, STROOD'S *Berberine servant, enters. The* GIRL *turns her eyes on him malevolently.*

STROOD. Sadig, you saw this girl come out of my tent just now?

SADIG. Yes, sah.

AMINA. Not true; you no see me come out!

SADIG. [*With a gesture of solemn affirmation*] Sah—that true. I see her come out.

STROOD. With something in her hand?

SADIG. Yes, sah; white thing.

STROOD. A letter?

SADIG. Sah—too far away. Can't say.

AMINA. You no see me.

STROOD. Quiet, you! How did she look—like a thief?

SADIG. Sah—she look this way, that way—[*he mimics what he has seen*] then see me, and run for Missah Herrick's tent. I follow. Missah Herrick—he not there. This girl stand and look at me and curse. I ask her what she do in my master's tent. She say she not do noting there, she say. Sah, I see her coming out. She bad—she steal something.

STROOD. What did you do then?

SADIG. Keep watch on her, an' call out big. Captain Lockyer he come and take her with these boys and send me fetch you, sah.

STROOD. What did she do while you were watching her?

SADIG. Spit at me—call me dog—she bad woman.

STROOD. Did she try and hide anything? Move her hands?

SADIG. She make her hands like this. [*He mimics hands on hips*] She is not a good one.

STROOD. [*To* HERRICK] Did you know of this letter?

HERRICK. Lockyer told me of it just now.

STROOD. Where?

HERRICK. In my tent.

STROOD. Was the girl present?

HERRICK. Yes.

STROOD. Lockyer, go with Sadig; search Mr. Herrick's tent thoroughly and come back quick.

[LOCKYER *and* SADIG *go out.*

HERRICK. By what right?

STROOD. Self-preservation. If the letter is not found in your tent, it is on this girl.

HERRICK. [*To the* GIRL, *sternly*] Did you steal this letter?

AMINA. [*With a spaniel's look*] I no steal. Arab girl not steal. Why I steal letter? No good for me.

HERRICK. What made you go into Mr. Strood's tent?

AMINA. I no go—stand outside.

HERRICK. Why?

AMINA. I go look in—see whether he got better tent than Herrick.

STROOD. Mr. Collie, go and search between my tent and Mr. Herrick's. Look well to both sides of a bee-line between.

[COLLIE *goes out.*

HERRICK. Whatever she's done, you'll treat her gently, please.

STROOD. The life of the expedition hangs on this letter. And by God, I'll have it, if I have to flay her alive. It's the life of one tricky baggage against all our lives.

HERRICK. You've been making cat's paws of us.

But as he speaks, LOCKYER, SADIG, *and* COLLIE *appear in the entrance.*

STROOD. Well, Captain Lockyer?

LOCKYER. Not there, sir.

STROOD. Collie!

COLLIE. Not a sign.

STROOD. [*Taking a step forward with the sjambok raised; to the* GIRL] Now! Give me that letter. Quick!

The GIRL *stands cowering, her eyes alive with hate. She gives a quick look of supplication at* HERRICK, *who takes a step towards her.*

STROOD. Surround her.

[*The* SOUDANESE *surround her.*

Stand still, Mr. Herrick. [*To the* GIRL] Will you give me that letter?

AMINA. I no got letter.

STROOD. Search her!

HERRICK. Stop that! Leave her to me!

Two SOUDANESE *bar him off with rifles; two seize the* GIRL. *A moment's pause.*

STROOD. Strip her!

LOCKYER. [*Suddenly*] Halt! [*The* SOUDANESE *are still*] Sorry, sir. Can't do that.

STROOD. [*Furiously*] Captain Lockyer—no damned squeamishness! It's your life and mine, and every man's here.

LOCKYER. Keep her in custody, sir; she'll give up the letter presently.

AMINA. [*With a proud and triumphant gesture*] I no got letter. I eat it!

STROOD *lashes at her, but the blow is intercepted by* LOCKYER'S *cane, and only falls lightly.*

AMINA. I kill you—one day.

STROOD. [*Recovering his self-possession in the strange way peculiar to him*] Very well! Captain Lockyer, raise camp. We march in an hour. Tell off three of your men to guard this girl, on pain of a flogging if they let her get away. She will go with us, and be shot if we're attacked. Sadig, bring me the two natives we took yesterday, and stand by to interpret. I'll tell them we've got Samehda's sister, and release them to spread the news of it.

[SADIG *goes out.*

COLLIE. Chief, have we a chance, now, to get through at all?

STROOD. I don't know; but we're going to try, Collie. Raise camp.

COLLIE *shrugs his shoulders, gathers up the two collected kits of himself and* LOCKYER, *and goes out.*

STROOD. Captain Lockyer, bind her fast and take her away. You will leave four of your men here with Dr. Franks, in charge of the ten carriers who can't march.

[LOCKYER *and his* MEN *go out with the* GIRL.

Dr. Franks, you will take the canoe and re-cross the river as soon as you can; you will camp till your men can march; then make your way back to the

Albert Edward, or to Tanganyika, as you find best.

FRANKS, *who has risen, stares at him without reply.*

Herrick, I shall keep your wench till we've crossed the Lomami river. No harm will come to her unless we're attacked. She has brought us to this pass, and she must get us out of it. You object to my ways of conducting a caravan; well, you now have an opportunity of judging how far you can get on without them.

He goes out, detaching the skin covering of the hut and letting it fall over the opening. There is silence, and but a dim light in the hut.

HERRICK. [*Crossing to where he can see* FRANKS] Marooned, Doctor.

[FRANKS *breaks into weak laughter.*

FRANKS. Lopped off—the rotten branches!

He stops with a sharp ejaculation and sinks down on to the blankets.

HERRICK. Here!

He lifts him and prepares to give him another injection.

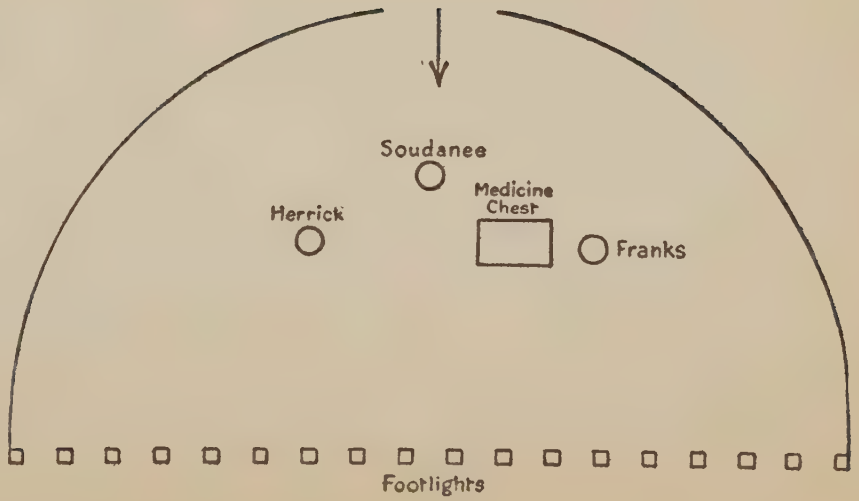
FRANKS. [*Feebly*] Thanks, thanks!

[*His mouth is distorted with pain.*

HERRICK *makes the injection; a faint smile comes on* FRANKS'S *face. He falls back, drowsy.*

FRANKS. The forest!

CURTAIN.


Soudanee
Medicine Chest
Herrick
Franks
Footlights

SCENE III

The curtain has been lowered for a few seconds to indicate the lapse of time.

The scene is the same, three days later. Noon.

The hut is empty of all gear except a medicine chest. The matting over the doorway is gone. FRANKS *is feebly going through contents of chest. The fever has left him, but he looks wan and exhausted.* HERRICK *enters, followed by a* SOUDANEE.

HERRICK. Doctor, quinine for this man.

FRANKS. [*Holding up a bottle*] This is all Strood's left me.

He beckons to the SOUDANEE, *looks at him searchingly, and gives him a dose. The* MAN *salutes and goes out.*

HERRICK. He's the best man we've got. . . . Still they don't attack—three days! Odd!

FRANKS. They must be following Strood up.

HERRICK. Practically no food, Franks. Daren't let them forage. Are you up to crossing?

FRANKS. [*Shrugging*] Must be.

HERRICK. Queer thing, colour. Suppose I shall never see that girl again; find I haven't half the feeling for her I'd have for a dog. Got room in that chest for this bottle? My frog; don't want to lose

him. Quaint chap, isn't he? [*He holds up the bottled specimen for* FRANKS *to see*] The variety of creature—the riot of life and death, in this forest!

FRANKS. Remember the carrier's dying wife in Stanley's book: "It's a bad world, master, and you have lost your way in it." We have. How many journeys in that canoe? Fourteen of us, and the loads?

HERRICK. Four, I should say. I'll just label this chap.

[FRANKS *goes out.*

HERRICK *sits down, tears a sheet from his pocket-book and writes: "Unwebbed frog, with claws. Found on the Lualaba river, Christmas, '98. C. Herrick."*

As he is attaching the label, the girl AMINA *comes in; her garments are torn, but her face and body show no great signs of fatigue. She steals round with the swaying movement peculiar to her, and has clasped his knees before he realises that she is there.*

AMINA. Amina come back! Escape—come through forest—back to Herrick.

Again she embraces his knees, and is about to kiss his feet.

HERRICK. [*Rising*] Get up. I don't like you to do that. [*Raising her by the shoulder and stroking it*] Where did you leave them, Amina?

AMINA. Two marches. [*With a smile that shows her white teeth*] They not clever—Amina too clever.

At night—she burn rope—look!

[*She shows a burnt place on her arm.*

HERRICK. God! That must have hurt!

AMINA. Five carrier run away—I find two dead of arrow. Soon all killed now or run away. They not go other marches—many. [*Her eyes and teeth gleam*] Now I guide Herrick home, quick. Amina clever—got letter still.

She steals her hand into the garment round her waist and brings out the letter.

HERRICK. You little snake!

AMINA. [*Proudly*] Save it for Herrick! [*She gives him the letter*] Herrick safe now.

HERRICK. [*Reading the letter; grave and puzzled*] Tell me now—what made you steal this letter?

AMINA. Strood hate Herrick—use letter—then leave Herrick behind, so Batetela kill. Now Batetela kill Strood instead—soon kill.

HERRICK. [*To himself*] Who'd ever understand how their minds work! Jezebel!

The word is Greek to AMINA, *but his gesture disturbs her.*

AMINA. Save Herrick's life. Herrick use letter—make my brother friend.

HERRICK. [*Alive to the expedition's danger*] Good God! What am I to do?

AMINA. Strood soon die—dog!

HERRICK. Listen, Amina! Strood and I not friends, but I never let Strood, Lockyer, Collie die. Understand? Never!

AMINA. No. Strood die. He strike me.

HERRICK. Take me to your brother. Come, now at once.

AMINA. No! Amina cross river now—take Herrick home.

HERRICK. Very well then—I go to join Strood and Lockyer.

AMINA. Ah, no! Why you care for Strood—he not care for you!

HERRICK. I don't care for Strood; but white men stick together.

AMINA. He enemy.

HERRICK. Come, now! Do what I tell you. Guide me to your brother.

AMINA. [*Passionately*] I live two year with Herrick—not want my people now. Not want forest—want only Herrick.

HERRICK. I swear by Allah, that you live no more with me unless you take me to your brother.

AMINA. If my brother know Strood strike me, he kill him.

HERRICK. You won't tell him. Come, now! Come!

AMINA. My brother angry. Why Strood come in his country? Make bad for my brother's trade. Send news to white men that my brother catch slave. Amina know. She hear talk. My brother all ready to kill Strood now. Strood very few mer—very weak.

HERRICK. Amina, once for all, take me to your brother, or you never see me again.

AMINA. [*Beating her breast*] Ah, no! I do all

for Herrick—burn rope—come all this way alone in forest to save his life.

HERRICK. Save the others too, then!

AMINA. Not Strood—bad man; leave Herrick and Doctor Frank behind to die.

HERRICK. Will you take me to your brother?

AMINA. [*Impassive suddenly*] You angry—I do what you tell.

FRANKS *has appeared in the opening of the hut.*

FRANKS. The canoe's gone, Herrick.

HERRICK. [*Holding out the letter and pointing with it to the* GIRL] She escaped. She's got this still.

FRANKS. And Strood?

HERRICK. In mortal danger, all of them! Her brother's the only chance. She must take me to him, now—at once.

FRANKS. And we?

HERRICK. Make a raft. Hang on, Franks; get across somehow. I'll come back or send a message within three days. They're in worse straits than we are—far.

FRANKS. [*In a low voice*] Can you trust her?

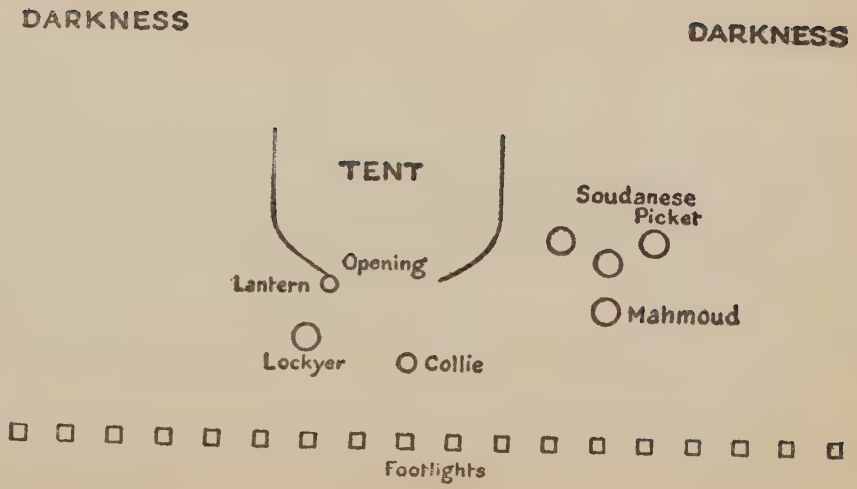
HERRICK. With myself? Yes. Good-bye, old man. Amina—come!

He goes out. The GIRL *follows him.*

FRANKS *stands aside, watching them go.*

CURTAIN.

ACT III


DARKNESS
DARKNESS
TENT
Soudanese
Picket
Opening
Lantern
Mahmoud
Lockyer
Collie
Footlights

ACT III

SCENE I

The tent of LOCKYER *and* COLLIE *in the forest, evening of the following day, four short marches from the Lualaba river. An oil lamp illumines the tent, the front side of which is open. Around is the loom of the forest; the faint outline of another tent is seen on one side and on the other four* SOUDANESE *are grouped—three squatting, one leaning on his rifle.*

LOCKYER *and* COLLIE, *in front of the tent, have just finished their scanty meal of bananas and biscuit, and are lighting their pipes—rifles and revolvers close at hand. Now and then drifts up the sound of native drums beaten out in the forest.*

COLLIE. [*Listening*] Those damned drums! Heh! but 'tis awfu' like the Salvation Army in Glasgow.

LOCKYER. Salvation! Rum idea that! What do you make of it, Collie?

COLLIE. We—el! I've known maself verra queer —times. A wee bit more, and I wouldna've been answerable for the consequences. Have ye never felt lik' that?

LOCKYER. Never!

COLLIE. That's your upbringin'. Ye can always tell an English gentleman—never drunk on anything but liquor.

LOCKYER. Well! He makes up there.

COLLIE. Wish to God I were drunk now. The girl's escape has fair finished us. We won't last to the Lomami river.

LOCKYER. What distance d'you make it still?

COLLIE. Forty miles. We've not come thirty these four days, and lost twelve men. And Strood won't turn; the man's demented.

LOCKYER. [*With a shrug*] Mahmoud!

[*The* SOUDANESE *on foot comes up at the call.*

Keep on your rounds, there!

The MAN *salutes, and goes on his round to the Right.*

I've got fever coming on, Collie; feel so darned talkative.

COLLIE. Aye, that's a sure sign of fever or insanity. Well, I'm no for a sleep meself till I've given Strood me mind. Got a drain of brandy there?

[LOCKYER *hands him a flask.*

LOCKYER. Collie! Mutton cutlets with new peas and asparagus, and a pint of iced champagne.

COLLIE. Na! A fresh-run salmon and a gallon o' mountain dew!

LOCKYER. Wonder what sort of a season they're having with the Quorn! What on earth brings us out into places like this? Good Lord! I think we're all

mad! This tobacco tastes rotten—always does before fever. My brother's got a horse running in the National next spring—wonder if he'll think of putting me anything on? Wonder if he thinks of me at all? Wonder if anyone thinks of fools like us? Collie! Cold pigeon pie and iced claret-cup, what! Or how about marrow-bones and a bottle of Steinberg Cabinet! Oh, damn! at home I never think of what I eat. If we were Belgians, we'd be talking about women. Ever play cricket?

COLLIE. [*Shaking his head*] Na—golf's ma diversion.

LOCKYER. Rotten game! I say, what do you think death really is?

COLLIE. We'll be no needin' to *think* if Strood won't turn.

LOCKYER. Change of trains—or a black-out, eh?

COLLIE. I'm no' certain. But it canna be worse than this forest.

LOCKYER. Ah! Imagine haunting this forest!

"And I am black, but oh! my soul is white;
White as an angel is the English child!"

COLLIE. Here! Tak' your temperature.

[*Hands him a thermometer.*

LOCKYER. [*Refusing it*] Wonder if the Almighty ever had to keep his wicket up against bowling like this? Almighty? But *if Almighty*, Collie—He can change the attack whenever it doesn't suit Him.

COLLIE. Na! I'm thinkin' the Deity has a manly

vocation. Fancy findin' ye'd made this forest! That'd tak' some livin' down.

LOCKYER. It is a corker. But think how we shall look back on it! By George! I can see myself with a long drink looking back.

COLLIE. Aye! Ye've got fever. Tak' some of these.

[*Handing him a little bottle of tabloids.*

LOCKYER. [*Swallowing two tabloids*] Married, aren't you, Collie?

[COLLIE *nods.*

That's bad. Children?

COLLIE. Two. Bonnie bairns.

LOCKYER. What on earth brought *you* out here?

COLLIE. We—el! Ah've got ambeetions for them.

[LOCKYER *bursts into a sort of laughter.*

LOCKYER. Sorry, old man! Only—ambitions here! It's rather—funny—what!

COLLIE. Aye! And I'm goin' to see Strood about it.

He gets up and passes towards the other tent at the back.

LOCKYER. [*To himself*] Poor old Collie!

The sound of the drums rises. LOCKYER *leans forward over his crossed legs, listening. The drum beats swell.*

LOCKYER. Gosh!

The SOUDANESE, *who have been squatting in talk, rise; they are joined by* MAHMOUD, *and come down to* LOCKYER.

MAHMOUD. Capt'n Sahib! Men say no go any more

—in morning all run away. This too bad country—bad men—cannibal.

The beating of the drums seems to come from every side. The SOUDANESE *manifest an attentive alarm.*

No can go more.

LOCKYER. [*Grasping his revolver and rising to his feet*] 'Shun!

[*The* MEN *stand half-heartedly at attention.* What's this, Mahmoud? If I tell Strood Sahib, he'll have you shot for mutiny.

MAHMOUD. No can shoot all. In morning all go.

LOCKYER. Come, Mahmoud—soldiers are not afraid. Obey orders.

MAHMOUD. [*Touching his mouth and stomach, imitated by the others*] No can march if not eat. Lockyer Sahib tell men "Right about." Then obey—men march—all go back to river. Lockyer Sahib good—our officer—Strood Sahib——

[*He shakes his head.*

LOCKYER. Mahmoud!

MAHMOUD. [*Grimly*] Our officer—he lead us—no mutiny then.

LOCKYER. You scoundrel! How dare you?

MAHMOUD. No, Sahib, we not bad—we hungry—got sores—no like die for not'ing. Carrier men run away—leave us—then all die quick—white men too. [*With a salute*] Lockyer Sahib, save um all.

LOCKYER. You are under my orders, Mahmoud! I am under Strood Sahib's.

MAHMOUD. [*Fiercely*] By Allah! No can go more.

LOCKYER *blows a whistle. There is a stir, and the emaciated forms of* CARRIERS *gather in the darkness behind the* SOUDANESE *to the left.* COLLIE *and* STROOD *come hurriedly from the darkness Right, with revolvers in their hands. They are followed by* SADIG.

STROOD. What's this, Captain Lockyer?

LOCKYER. The men refuse to march to-morrow.

STROOD. Who speaks for them?

LOCKYER. [*Pointing*] Mahmoud—there.

STROOD. [*Covering him with his revolver*] Put him under arrest.

LOCKYER. [*To* MAHMOUD] Ground arms!

MAHMOUD *lays down his rifle and folds his arms with a certain dignity.*

STROOD. Now, my man, refuse orders to-morrow morning, and you'll be shot. [*To the* CARRIERS] Listen, children. Those who run away—all killed by Batetela.

Two of the CARRIERS *emerge from among the huddled mass of them. They are poor, emaciated creatures.*

1ST CARRIER. Master! No food—got many sores—got fever. Dis bad caravan. Go back to ribber—cross ribber—some food.

2ND CARRIER. We not engage come in dis country, master; hab wife—hab children. Soon we fall down—no able carry load. Look, master! We not go-ee, go-ees. Look! [*He lifts the rag of his garment*

to display his emaciated leg, disfigured by a great sore.]

[LOCKYER *turns his head away.*

STROOD. Listen! [*Pointing to* MAHMOUD] This man tell you wrong. No can go back. If go back, Batetela attack, kill every man. Now, sons, trust me. No one else can save you. Trust me.

The CARRIERS *look at him, beseeching, doubting, trying to see if he is speaking truth.*

1ST CARRIER. [*A Zanzibari*] Master, to-day Khamis die—[*pointing to* 2*nd* CARRIER] to-morrow Umari die—[*pointing to another*] my brother Mabruk he die soon; this too far from our country—bad forest—bad men—eat enemy.

3RD CARRIER. [MABRUK] Master, two moons we travel—carry load too fast—all that thick forest not like our country. Sometime no food—our stomach empty. When we try find food—No!—White men drive on—drive on. Sometime want little sleep—sit down—white man come with whip—[*he makes the appropriate gesture*] We not go-ee go-ees. We men—not dog.

STROOD. Not men, Mabruk—children! The whip saved your lives. You fools! stray away in that forest, you never come back! Manyema in that old forest; Batetela in this forest. Keep together, children, keep on, keep on; if not, death all round to take you, Mabruk.

3RD CARRIER. Inshallah—death come when it come. Me tired—me sick——

STROOD. Listen, my son; listen, all! In four days I bring you out of the forest. Bring you to good country—plenty food—no bad men—more carriers—plenty more! All this way—a little further, and we're safe. Courage, men! Trust me! Now go and sleep! Go and sleep! To-morrow we march quickly!

He waves his hand, and the shadowy figures melt away into the darkness, with murmurs of: "Inshallah! Inshallah!"

Mahmoud, take up your rifle! Obey orders!

MAHMOUD *resumes his rifle, and the* FOUR SOUDANESE *retreat to their picket.*

LOCKYER. Poor devils!

STROOD. [*Turning on him*] Our only chance is carrying on. We're in mid-stream. The pressure'll get less.

COLLIE. Ye'll never get 'em forrard. There's a limit; and it's well to know when ye've reached it.

STROOD. No limit to will power, Collie, none!

COLLIE. There's a limit to human strength. Ye're sacrificing the lot of us for no good. Turn back!

STROOD. Never! Never have, never shall. You, Lockyer—a soldier! One spurt and we'll win out. Come!

LOCKYER. If you order me on [*with a shrug*] I'll go.

STROOD. I do. Collie!

HERRICK'S *voice from the darkness; "Don't shoot! Friends!"*

LOCKYER. Herrick!

The THREE MEN *stand alert and waiting. From Left Back appear* HERRICK *and* AMINA, *surrounded by the* SOUDANESE *picket.*

STROOD. Seize that wench!

HERRICK. [*Who looks exhausted*] No. [*He takes the* GIRL *by the arm.*] Drink.

LOCKYER *hands him a water-bottle, which he passes to the* GIRL *first. She drinks and sinks down, squatting and watching.*

HERRICK, *after drinking, takes out the letter.*

STROOD. She had it—after all? So much for squeamishness, Captain. Twelve men lost by it!

HERRICK. Do you want this letter delivered now?

STROOD. [*Sardonically*] Do we want to live?

HERRICK. Amina, go—fetch your brother.

AMINA *stands up. Her eyes seem to stab* STROOD.

Go! Call him.

As if hypnotised, the GIRL *sways out to the edge of the clearing and is lost among the trees. The* MEN *stand waiting. Presently a long, shrill, peculiar call is heard—repeated—then answered faintly from the forest. Round the* WHITE MEN *grouped in the light from the tent lantern, and the motionless* SOUDANESE, *the emaciated forms of the* CARRIERS *can be seen dimly to the Left, gathering in the darkness.*

COLLIE. Is she for a bit o' new treachery, d'ye think?

HERRICK. Got any brandy?

LOCKYER *hands him the flask and some biscuits.*

HERRICK *drinks from it and nibbles a biscuit.*

You're surrounded here.

STROOD. [*To* LOCKYER] Take your men and see what she's doing.

HERRICK. Wait! Wait!

There is another moment of silent waiting. Then TWO FIGURES *are seen coming from the darkness, Right Back. The* GIRL *comes first, and after her, imposing, dark, hawk-faced, clad in light garments, her brother, the half-caste Arab,* SAMEHDA. *She leads him up to the group, and the two stand silent and apart.*

HERRICK. Samehda! Salaam!

AMINA. [*To her brother*] Herrick—good.

HERRICK *advances, holding out the letter. As he does so,* AMINA *says something low and rapid to her brother in their language.*

HERRICK. From Samway.

SAMEHDA *steps forward and takes the letter with a salaam. He reads it by the light of the oil lantern and then retreats and stands with his head drawn back, looking*

from one white man to another, AMINA *at his elbow.*

SAMEHDA. Chief man?

AMINA *points to* STROOD, *and again speaks low and rapidly in a language the white men do not understand.*

SAMEHDA. [*Making a movement to silence her*] Samway—my brother. You Strood?

STROOD *advances, holding out his hand.* SAMEHDA *does not take it, but salaams.*

SAMEHDA. Palaver.

After a certain hesitation they sit down cross-legged. The CARRIERS *also squat in the background; only the* SOUDANESE *remain standing, leaning on their rifles.*

SAMEHDA. Belgian man here?

STROOD. No; Englishmen—all.

SAMEHDA. [*With a deep sound*] Belgian my enemy. Belgian kill many my people—take away my slave. Why you come my country?

STROOD. Samehda, we are no friends of Belgians. We come to take Belgian country many marches from here. [*Pointing to the south*] South—far.

SAMEHDA. [*Pointing to* HERRICK] This man friend of my sister—Samway say—long time friend?

HERRICK. [*Bowing*]. Yes.

SAMEHDA. [*Pointing to* LOCKYER] This man no Belgian?

LOCKYER. English.

SAMEHDA. [*Pointing to* COLLIE] This man?

COLLIE. Scot.

STROOD. Brother of English.

SAMEHDA. [*With a deep sound which may or may not be approval*] What you come for?

STROOD. I tell you: we pass through your country, go far south, take away some Belgian country.

SAMEHDA. [*Reserved and ironic*] I born Zanzibar—I know white men—come from across sea—take country—ivory—slave—all that belong Arab. Belgian—English—German. And all say: "Serve Allah! Free slave!" All steal from Arab.

STROOD. Arab stole first from black men, Samehda.

SAMEHDA. Then Arab keep if can; white men take if can. Arab serve Allah too.

STROOD. Allah made men free, Samehda; Arab make men slaves.

SAMEHDA. White men make slave too—carrier men. If run away—whip, shoot.

STROOD. Hear me, Samehda. Samway is my friend.

SAMEHDA. Samway my brother.

STROOD. Help us to cross your country: we will make you a large present. Come! Do what Samway asks you.

AMINA *murmurs rapidly in the unknown tongue.*

SAMEHDA. My father chief man. I his son. [*Touching* AMINA] This one his daughter—daughter of Arab chief man. You—[*he makes the motion of striking*] Why?

STROOD. She stole that letter from my tent. Suppose you have a great strong letter, Samehda, a woman steal it—what you do?

SAMEHDA. No whip for Arab. Arab not black man.

STROOD. [*Pressing him*] She did a very bad thing to steal that letter. That letter is from your brother Samway. He saved your life; Arab never forget.

SAMEHDA. [*Loftily*] Arab good man.

STROOD. Listen! You give us carriers—forty. You make all quiet for us. At the Lomami river we give you good present—some rifles—some cloth. Afterward more present—bigger.

SAMEHDA. How much rifle—how many cloth?

STROOD. Ten pieces of cloth when we reach the Lomami; after crossing, ten rifles.

SAMEHDA. You give me rifle made in Germany?

STROOD. Good rifles.

SAMEHDA. No! You give me ten English rifle now; then I see.

STROOD. At the river, Samehda.

SAMEHDA. Suppose I no help?—Batetela very many—very strong. Got poison arrow; kill all. Take all rifles, then.

STROOD. [*Vigorously*] If we are killed, a great army will avenge us. Remember your father—how the white men came.

SAMEHDA. [*With a smile*] This Belgian country. English soldier no come here. English—Belgian not good friend.

STROOD. Samehda, listen! I, too, am a chief man in my country—a strong chief. My death will make much noise. My Government will make the Belgians send an army—kill you—take your country.

SAMEHDA. [*Softly*] If you die, no one know. [*With a gesture*] Forest hide all.

STROOD. You refuse, then?

SAMEHDA. [*Elusive*] Samway my brother.

STROOD. Well?

SAMEHDA. You give me ten rifle now.

STROOD. [*Rising*] Palaver finish. I take you both with me to the Lomami river.

SAMEHDA *and the* GIRL *spring up. All are on their feet.*

No attack, while I have *you.*

SAMEHDA'S *glance slides round,* STROOD *lifts his revolver.*

Stand! Don't move!

SAMEHDA. [*With dignity*] This *peace* palaver—you no keep word.

STROOD. For our lives—you force me.

While he is speaking the GIRL *has glided forward, stooping, and strikes upward at* STROOD'S *lifted arm, with a little dagger; he drops the revolver, wounded in the wrist, and tries to seize her with the other hand; but she glides past him and away into the darkness, pursued by* TWO SOUDANESE *and* SADIG. SAMEHDA *has sprung back, drawing a knife.* LOCKYER *dashes forward to seize him;*

there is a swift ham-stringing cut and LOCKYER *stumbles, clinging to the tent-pole for support.* SAMEHDA *turns and darts away.* COLLIE *rushes in pursuit of him; they disappear in the darkness to the Right. There are two shots, then a long groan, and in wailing, chattering confusion the* CARRIERS *disperse into the darkness.*

STROOD. Stop them! Herrick! Mahmoud! Lockyer!—stop them!

He, HERRICK, *and the* SOUDANESE *dash after them.* —

LOCKYER *is left clinging to the tent-pole. One or two more shots are heard; the drum-beats swell furiously.* LOCKYER *tries to leave the support of the tent-pole and walk, but sinks to the ground. He sits there, feeling and examining his leg.*

LOCKYER. Ham-strung! My God!

He crawls back to the tent-pole, takes up his revolver and painfully raises himself till he is leaning against the pole, the lantern hanging quite close to his face. To this one lighted spot STROOD *and* HERRICK *come back.*

STROOD. Lockyer!

LOCKYER. Here!

STROOD. Gone—every rat! Soudanese too. Not a man left. Not a man!

LOCKYER. Collie?

HERRICK. I stumbled over his body.

Savage cries from the forest and the beating of drums.

They're on us.

STROOD. Into the bushes, quick! Stick together. Come!

HERRICK. Any chance?

STROOD. Yes! Yes! Come on! We'll slip through them yet. Come on—both of you. Stick close to me.

HERRICK. Hurt, Lockyer?

LOCKYER. Nothing.

STROOD. By compass—due west. Keep close, now! Keep close.

[*He moves to the Left, followed by* HERRICK.

LOCKYER. I'll just put out this light.

He extinguishes the lantern and sinks down under the lee of the tent. A moment's empty, dark silence.

HERRICK. [*Returning; in a low voice*] Lockyer! Lockyer!

STROOD'S VOICE. [*From Left*] Come on! I can hear him—he's ahead.

[HERRICK *feels the tent-pole and peers about.*

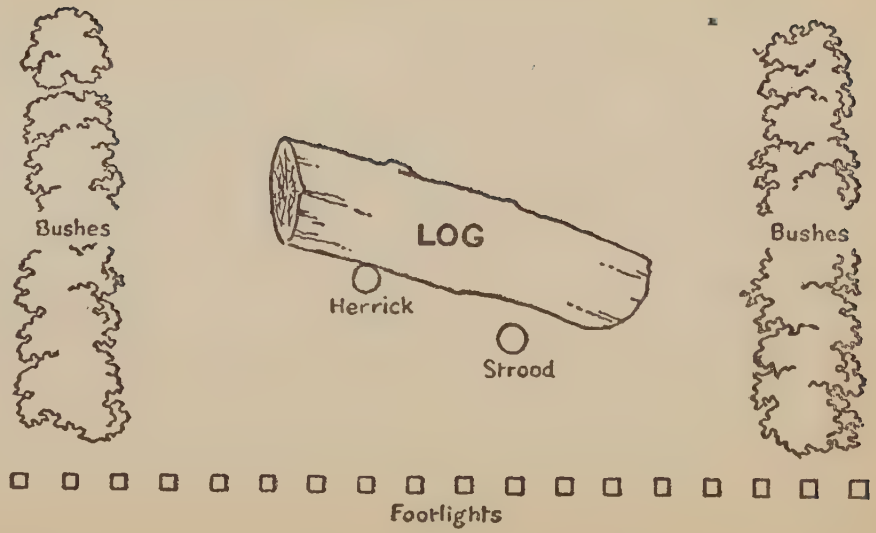
STROOD'S VOICE. Come on! Come on!

[HERRICK *goes.*

Silence but for the sound of the drums. Then dead silence.

LOCKYER'S VOICE. [*Low, in the darkness*] Good luck!

CURTAIN.


Bushes
LOG
Herrick
Strood
Bushes
Footlights

SCENE II [1]

The forest on the following day—noon. A fallen trunk, huge and rotten, with viper-like creepers, lies along the Back Centre of the scene leading up Stage. HERRICK *lies propped against the log, unconscious.* STROOD *is bending over him. He moves a step away, and himself squats down, staring at* HERRICK. *He seems to be struggling to form a resolve. He leans forward and listens for the sound of* HERRICK'S *breathing; then, at some noise, recoils, every nerve taut, listening to the forest. Nothing! He relaxes a moment in physical exhaustion. Then with an effort, again forces his mind to the forming of that resolve, fixing his queer stare on* HERRICK, *still unconscious. His shoulders shrug convulsively and he rises. He has taken two stealthy steps away when* HERRICK *stirs.* STROOD *stands still, then turns his head.* HERRICK'S *eyes have opened; they are fixed on his. The two men stare at each other without speaking. A faint smile flickers on* HERRICK'S *face.*

HERRICK. It's all right—go!

[1] With the tent gone, entirely different lighting, and a fresh backcloth, the same setting can be used as in the preceding scene.

STROOD. For water.

HERRICK. [*With the same smile*] For water?

STROOD. Do you think I was leaving you?

HERRICK. Yes. Why not? I've got a shot left. Our souls are naked here, Strood. Not worth keeping it from me. Shake hands.

STROOD. I meant to go. But damn me if I do. We'll get through yet. Lie here, I'll find some water. Back—soon!

He goes, treading stealthily away among the trees to the Left. HERRICK, *left alone, mumbles his dry lips with his tongue, and leans back against the trunk, the picture of exhaustion, with his hand on his revolver.*

HERRICK. [*Muttering*] Back—will he?

The face of AMINA *is poked out from some bushes on the Right. She steals noiselessly up to* HERRICK'S *side. With her eyes fixed on his face she waits for him to stir.* HERRICK *opens his eyes and sees her.*

HERRICK. You!

AMINA. Batetela track all night. I follow—kill one fellow in bush there. [*She shows her dagger*] Come with Amina! Samehda friend to my friend. All safe with Amina! [*Putting his hand to her breast*] Come!

HERRICK *continues to stare at her without speaking.*

AMINA. If not quick, too late. Batetela soon

here—find dead fellow—kill Herrick then. My brother not far—two three mile.

HERRICK. Strood.

AMINA. Quick!

HERRICK. Wait for him.

AMINA. No. He strike me. He break word. Strood dead man. Batetela all round—all over forest—many—soon find Herrick too.

HERRICK. [*Raising his revolver*] Not alive.

AMINA. [*Embracing his knees*] Ah! no! Come! Herrick safe with Samehda. Come quick! Strood leave you here to die.

HERRICK. No. Gone for water.

AMINA. Strood find water; he go on. Strood let all die, if he live.

HERRICK. [*Slowly*] No, I'll wait.

AMINA. If Strood come back, he shoot me.

[HERRICK *rises.*

AMINA. [*Clinging to him, twining round him, trying to draw him away into the bushes*] Come! Come!

HERRICK. Let go, girl! I'll wait!

AMINA. [*Recoiling suddenly*] Strood.

STROOD *has appeared from the forest, Left.*

HERRICK. [*With triumph, to the* GIRL] See!

[*The* GIRL *shrinks behind the trunk.*

STROOD *lifts his revolver, but the* GIRL, *interposing the trunk, creeps back into cover.*

STROOD. Why didn't you hold her? Are they on us?

HERRICK. She killed a tracker out there.

[*The sound of drums is heard.*

STROOD. [*Slicing a length of creeper from the tree*] Here! Tie yourself to me. Come on! She'll follow. We'll get her yet.

[*They tie the creeper around their waists. The almost naked form of a* SAVAGE *emerges from the bushes on the Right. With a cry, he darts back into the bushes. Yells follow and the beating of drums.*

STROOD. Back to back, when we must. Now! Into the thick.

He hastens forward, half dragging HERRICK *into the forest. Two dark* FIGURES *glide from the bushes and pass crouching. Then a splendid* SAVAGE *is seen standing clear, he leaps on to the fallen trunk, and stretches his bow. There is a shot; the* SAVAGE *shoots his arrow and leaps forward into the forest. The stage is empty again; three more shots are heard, some fierce cries; then* STROOD, *half dragging, half supporting* HERRICK, *comes back towards the trunk. Two arrows have pierced* HERRICK'S *back, the shafts visible.*

HERRICK. [*Prostrate*] Cut, cut! I'm done!

For answer STROOD *lifts him.* AMINA *emerges from the bushes, Right, and leaps towards* HERRICK. STROOD, *dropping* HERRICK, *who sinks down dead, levels*

his revolver and fires. But the revolver clicks. It is empty. He throws it down, and stands quite still, unarmed, exposed, with his eyes fixed on the GIRL, *who crouches forward towards him.*

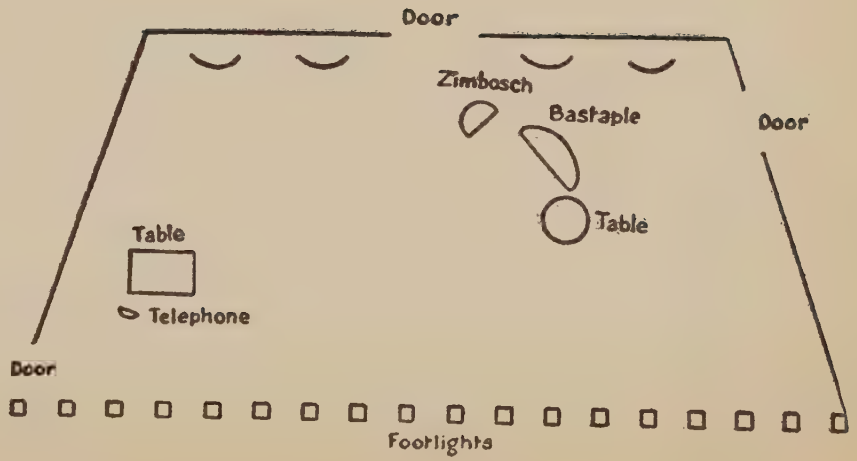
STROOD. Well! . . . Come on if you dare, you forest hell-cat!

His face has a kind of exaltation of defiance, as if holding a wild beast at bay with the force of his gaze. The GIRL *stands hypnotised. At a sound from the bushes* STROOD *turns his head for a second. Quick as thought the* GIRL *springs and drives her dagger into his heart. With a gasp, he falls against the trunk, dead. The* GIRL *flings herself down by* HERRICK'S *dead body, stroking it and uttering a crooning lament.*

A SAVAGE *steals out of the bushes and stops three paces away, looking down at* STROOD'S *half-recumbent body. A kind of contraction passes over* STROOD'S *face. The* SAVAGE *recoils, raising his spear.* STROOD'S *face relaxes in death. The* SAVAGE *bends forward, regarding the dead white man with a sort of awe. Drums are being beaten in the forest. The stage is darkened.*

CURTAIN.

ACT IV


Door
Zimbasch
Bastaple
Door
Table
Table
Telephone
Door
Footlights

ACT IV

SCENE I

The following June. Bastaple's outer sanctum in the City of London. Afternoon.

BASTAPLE *is seated at his little table.* BARON ZIMBOSCH *in a chair to his right.*

ZIMBOSCH. Since the middle of May, Mr. Bastaple, they have been sitting there at Bloemfontein, Milner and Oom Paul Kruger. Well, it is over—the Conference.

BASTAPLE. What's the result?

ZIMBOSCH. Impasse. The more Kruger ask, the more Milner refuse; the more Milner ask, the more Kruger stick his heel. No one will know for a fortnight; but take it from me, Mr. Bastaple: this is a cert—no agreement.

BASTAPLE. H'm!

ZIMBOSCH. [*Nodding*] War—in the autumn. When the result of this Conference is known—up go the temperatures. A bad attack of war fever—you will see.

BASTAPLE. Quite sure about your news?

ZIMBOSCH. Absolute! Cable this morning; best information from the back stair. You may bottom your dollar on it, Mr. Bastaple. My word—

Africans! La! La! But you have a fortnight still before the news is out. Your friend Beton has his General Meeting the day after to-morrow, isn't it? If he gets his coolie labour, you have your chance to get out yet. I admire Robert Beton, he is idealist to his tiptoes. *Bon Dieu!* you are all idealists in this country.

[BASTAPLE *smiles.*

Ah! not you, Mr. Bastaple—not you!

The door, Back, is opened, and FARRELL *appears; he closes and is about to advance when* BASTAPLE *waves him back.*

BASTAPLE. One minute, Farrell.

[FARRELL *retires.*

ZIMBOSCH. [*Rising*] Well, I hope I have brought you some useful news this time. You remember how Rothschild won the battle of Waterloo. And they put that lion up in the sky—the British-Belgian lion! My Lord! What a monster! Curious no country has taken a tiger for its pet animal!

BASTAPLE. No uplift about a tiger, Baron.

ZIMBOSCH. [*Preparing to go*] And our steamers, Mr. Bastaple? We are looking to you for that loan.

BASTAPLE. You have my word, Baron.

ZIMBOSCH. The word of Adrian Bastaple. [*With a bow*] Good afternoon then, Mr. Bastaple. You have yet a fortnight.

[*He is moving to the door back.*

BASTAPLE. [*Rising and motioning to the door, Right*] This way, Baron.

He shows him out, then presses his bell. FARRELL *enters from his room.*

FARRELL. Mr. Beton is here, sir; but Mr. Stanforth and Lord Elderleigh have not yet come.

BASTAPLE. What are South African Concessions at this afternoon?

FARRELL. Still sagging, sir—fifteen shillings.

BASTAPLE. Back about three-sixteenths all round, um?

FARRELL. Yes, sir. Oh! you saw this, sir, in this morning's paper? [*Reads from cutting*] "Dr. Clement Franks arrived in London yesterday from Mombasa. He has lately returned from the Congo, where he accompanied Mr. Strood, Captain Lockyer, and Mr. Collie in the expedition of which as yet no news has been received. Dr. Franks was left at the Lualaba river, in command of the men who were unfit to travel further. His mission in London is to communicate with those who promoted this mysterious adventure. He declined to give our representative any further details."

BASTAPLE. Yes, I saw that.

FARRELL. Will you have Mr. Beton in?

BASTAPLE. Yes.

FARRELL. [*Opening the door*] Oh! the others have just come, sir. Will you come in, gentlemen?

BETON *comes in, followed almost immediately by* STANFORTH *and* LORD ELDERLEIGH.

BETON. Seen that about Franks, Bastaple? I hope to God he'll give us some good news.

ELDERLEIGH. He sent a letter overland to his cousin Mr. Tregay.

BETON. What does he say?

STANFORTH. [*Coldly*] We have come about that.

ELDERLEIGH. I'm afraid we shall have to speak plainly. Mr. Tregay holds the theory that this expedition has been dust in our eyes, Mr. Beton. It appears you are bringing forward a scheme for coolie labour at your meeting the day after to-morrow which is entirely—entirely contrary to our ideals and views. Mr. Tregay has suggested that you and Mr. Bastaple have tried to blind us with this anti-slavery expedition. He calls it a red herring.

BASTAPLE. Mr. Tregay is a picturesque person, my lord.

ELDERLEIGH. That may be. But this coolie scheme is not a figure of speech, and we—I speak for Nonconformist opinion—are dead against it.

STANFORTH. I speak for Liberalism—dead against it. Africa is for the white man, and we won't have the yellow there, nor that dressed-up slavery, indentured labour.

BETON. Africa will not be for the white man in our time, *without* my coolie labour. I want to see the white man there, and you don't care two straws about it. No, you don't—neither of you. You just want to air your principles, or whatever you call them. Very well; it's a fight.

ELDERLEIGH. I should like to know: was it a red herring?

BASTAPLE. Really, my lord——

BETON. It was; I don't care a damn whether you know it or not. I'm too sorry about those poor fellows swallowed up in that forest.

ELDERLEIGH. Stanforth, is there anything to stay for?

STANFORTH. No, there's everything to go for.

ELDERLEIGH. Then we meet the day after to-morrow at—Philippi. Good afternoon!

[*They go out.*

BETON. This is a bolt from the blue! We've made a mistake not to have proxies, Bastaple. The cat's out of the bag and might just as well have been out sooner. Well, I shall let myself go at the meeting —they'll get it from the shoulder. "Africa for the white man!" Bunkum! It'll take a hundred years that way. I want to see my dreams come true in my lifetime.

BASTAPLE. The market's got wind; shares are sagging.

BETON. Let 'em; their future's safe.

BASTAPLE. The Boers, Beton?

BETON. Oh! old Kruger will have climbed down all right. If Dr. Franks comes here, let me have the news. I must go to work on this. I shall get it through, yet.

He goes out, Back. BASTAPLE *is left brooding.*

BASTAPLE. [*To himself*] Not he! [*He takes a*

sheet of paper and begins figuring] A damned bad hole!

He crosses over to the telephone, takes up the receiver, but puts it back again. After a turn up and down, he goes to the table, takes a cigar from the box, and is about to light it when

FARRELL *enters, Right, from the waiting-room.*

FARRELL. Dr. Franks, sir, in the waiting-room.

BASTAPLE. Oh! very well!

[FARRELL *retires to his own room.*

BASTAPLE *replaces the cigar, crosses to the waiting-room, and opens the door.*

BASTAPLE. Dr. Franks? Adrian Bastaple.

FRANKS *comes in. Very sun-dark and thin, with the look of a man who has been through a terrible strain. He is a great contrast to* BASTAPLE.

BASTAPLE. Glad to see you, Dr. Franks. Read of your arrival in this morning's paper. What news?

FRANKS. [*Taking a long envelope from his pocket*] You had the long cable I sent through your agents at Mombasa?

[BASTAPLE *nods.*

This is my detailed report. But from the time Strood left me at the Lualaba river, I've no news—none. They went on in hostile country—thick forest ahead—savage cannibals; they were very weak, very ill-provided in every

way to resist attack. They must have foundered utterly.

BASTAPLE. But you?

FRANKS. By a miracle I got through to Tanganyika with six out of the twelve men left with me.

BASTAPLE. [*Impressed by his voice and his look*] You have been through much, I'm afraid.

FRANKS. [*Sombrely*] The forest.

BASTAPLE. And you struck no signs of the slave trade?

FRANKS. None. You'll find it all here.

[*Handing the report.*

BASTAPLE. Shortly—what's the story?

FRANKS. We travelled from the Albert Edward to the Lualaba——

BASTAPLE. One second. [*He goes to the table, takes out and spreads a map*] Put your finger on the places.

They stand side by side behind the table, and FRANKS *touches the map from time to time.*

FRANKS. From here to here at the utmost speed we could manage in that forest; forced marches, avoiding native villages, every human being we could.

BASTAPLE. How do you account for that?

FRANKS. After we'd crossed the Lualaba river—which was never in the programme as we thought—Strood told us: he was not really looking for the slave trade. His objective was down here [*points*]

—diamond fields, reported to him by an elephant-hunter called Samway.

BASTAPLE. Diamonds?

FRANKS. Besides Samway, a Belgian knew of them, he was travelling from Basoko—here—to claim them. Strood was racing him.

BASTAPLE. A wild departure, Dr. Franks.

FRANKS. Strood seemed to think the discovery important to the British Empire; our lives of no account so long as he got there first.

BASTAPLE. [*Brooding*] You were left here [*he points*], you say? Why mightn't Strood have got through?

FRANKS. Imagine the back of night, the bottom of hell, and you'll have some conception of the conditions.

BASTAPLE. Still—you yourself——

FRANKS. I recrossed the river. The country's terrible enough, but not full of hostile cannibals. If he hadn't perished, some news *must* have filtered through.

BASTAPLE. What about that Belgian expedition?

FRANKS. It turned back.

BASTAPLE. Ah!

FRANKS. Strood was alone among us in wishing to go on. [*With a sudden look at* BASTAPLE] May I ask you a question?

[BASTAPLE *nods.*

Was he told to embroil us with the Belgians?

BASTAPLE. He was told to look for the slave trade, Dr. Franks.

FRANKS. Forgive me. I——

BASTAPLE. [*With a conciliatory wave of his hand; tracing on the map*] All this country in front of Strood. What is there?

FRANKS. Forest, marsh, hostile natives. Further on, I believe, it's better.

BASTAPLE. No white posts?

FRANKS. Not south of him.

BASTAPLE. [*His eyes very alive*] I see. Dr. Franks, we owe you a great debt for what you've been through. In what way can I serve you?

FRANKS. Oh? thank you—none.

BASTAPLE. What are you going to do now?

FRANKS. See Captain Lockyer's people, and Mr. Collie's. After that, I don't know.

BASTAPLE. Is any money due to you?

FRANKS. No; it was all paid up at Mombasa. [*Looking suddenly at* BASTAPLE] I want to forget the whole thing—if I can.

BASTAPLE. I understand: painful—newspaper gossip, and all that. The less said!

FRANKS. Yes. But with my report my duty ends. I can make no promises.

BASTAPLE. Why should you, Dr. Franks? Why should you? [*He rings*] I shall read your report at once.

[FARRELL *enters.*

Please leave your address. Many thanks, again. Good-bye!

FRANKS. Good-bye.

[FARRELL *and* FRANKS *go out.*

BASTAPLE, *alone, brings his hands together, presses the palms closely, rubs them; then stands still. On his face is the look of a man who suddenly sees his way. Then, going to the map, he examines it, passing his finger down, as if tracing an imaginary route. When he raises his head, the expression on his face has changed to one of great determination. He rings the bell and stands behind the map, waiting.*

[FARRELL *enters.*

FARRELL. Yes, sir?

BASTAPLE. Farrell, Dr. Franks has been telling me about Strood's expedition. Follow me. [*He traces with his finger on the map*] It seems that when Franks was left behind, here, Strood was making for some diamond fields—there in the Kasai—to secure them for South African Concessions.

FARRELL. [*Startled*] Indeed, sir?

BASTAPLE. Dr. Franks thinks he cannot possibly have reached those diamond fields, and that the whole expedition has foundered. I think—he is unduly pessimistic.

FARRELL. You—you do, sir?

BASTAPLE. I shouldn't be surprised if at any moment we had news—of his having reached them. My instinct is not often wrong. [*As if to himself*] A new De Beers discovered for South African Concessions—! God-sent! God-sent, Farrell!

FARRELL. [*His mouth opening a little*] Yes, sir.

BASTAPLE. But no use, if it doesn't come within a fortnight. When the Transvaal news is out, Africans will drop to nothing.

FARRELL. Oh! . . . If Strood—how should we be likely to hear, sir?

BASTAPLE. [*Pointing to map*] From the west coast, I imagine—a Portuguese source, probably. [*Turning to* FARRELL] If coolie labour doesn't go through, Farrell, I am face to face with something like disaster.

FARRELL. [*Gazing intently*] I—I—see, sir. I heard of the opposition; Mr. Stanforth was most sarcastic. But is there *no* chance of coolie labour going through?

BASTAPLE. We must wait for the General Meeting. If it does go through, Strood's success is less material. If it doesn't—and it won't, Farrell, it won't—his success is vital. [*A pause—with sudden emphasis*] But he's no more a man to fail than I.

FARRELL. N—no, sir.

BASTAPLE. [*Hardening*] Did you ever know my instinct wrong?

FARRELL. N—no, sir.

BASTAPLE. Dr. Franks got through, then why not Strood? We are not all so pessimistic, Farrell.

FARRELL. N—no, sir.

BASTAPLE. What shares are left in my name?

FARRELL. Only the twenty thousand, sir.

BASTAPLE. Good. The rest are to be sold at any price above a pound. [*Putting his finger on a spot in the map*] Study this map.

He crosses to the door and goes through into his inner sanctum.

FARRELL *is left gazing at the map with round eyes. He blows out his cheeks and lets them slowly subside.*

FARRELL. [*To himself*] What a man!

CURTAIN.

SCENE II

[*The same, in the afternoon, four days later.*

[FARRELL *is at the telephone.*

FARRELL. No, he's been out of town the last three days. . . . Yes . . . I quite follow—two currents—selling on the coolie failure—buying on this report . . . much the stronger! . . . I see. What have they touched? . . . Thirty shillings! Still upward? . . . Ah, ha! Batson! buy me five thousand for Mr. Bastaple's account; you've just time before they close. . . . Yes, yes. . . . Exactly. . . . Right. [*Cutting off. To himself*] Buying! [*He sits, smiling.*] A master stroke.

The door, Back, is opened and BASTAPLE *comes in, top-hatted.* FARRELL *starts up and looks at him eagerly. But his face is like that of a graven image. He passes without a word into his inner sanctum.* FARRELL *is hesitating whether to follow, when he comes back without hat or gloves.*

BASTAPLE. Well, Farrell?

FARRELL. There's been a very heavy rise all day on this report—buying mostly from the general public. [*With his quick look*] There's been heavy selling too, sir. [*A little meaning smile.*

BASTAPLE. Really?

FARRELL. Yes, sir. The demand is so great, I fully expect all the dummies will be sold before closing time. [*He rubs his hands.*] In fact, I'm waiting for——

BASTAPLE. Did you get my wire?

FARRELL. Yes, sir, and I've bought you the fifteen thousand, in three hands; it—it must be well over the City that you're buying. [*Nervously*] Er—"Another De Beers," that's what——

BASTAPLE. Yes, this report about Strood is almost too good to be true. Where did it come from, Farrell?

FARRELL. [*With his quick look*] Portuguese source, sir.

BASTAPLE. As I thought. Mr. Beton been here?

FARRELL. Yes, sir; he came the morning after the General Meeting, very upset by the coolie failure. And again this morning about the report of Strood's finding these diamonds. I told him you'd been out of town ever since he was here with Mr. Stanforth and Lord Elderleigh.

BASTAPLE. What did he say to this report about Strood?

FARRELL. Seemed doubtful, sir—wanted to know what *you* thought. I told him; I'd just had a wire from you to buy. *That* impressed him. But he said this find wouldn't console him for the smash of his coolie scheme. Only Strood's being safe was a great relief. He wanted to know if the

news had come from Dr. Franks. I said I thought not. Dr. Franks had been here, but he had no news.

BASTAPLE. I must see Dr. Franks again. Send for him.

[*He goes back into his inner sanctum.*

FARRELL stands for a moment looking after him, nervously licking his lips. He has turned to the door, Back, to go out, when it is opened and a CLERK *says:*

CLERK. Mr. Tregay and Dr. Franks, sir.

[*They come in.*

TREGAY. Mr. Farrell, can we see your chief?

FARRELL. Certainly, sir. He was just saying he wanted to see Dr. Franks. Will you take a seat?

TREGAY and FRANKS stand over on the Right, and FARRELL goes into the sanctum. He returns almost immediately.

FARRELL. In a minute, gentlemen. Will you smoke?

They will not, and FARRELL goes into his room, with a quick look round at them. They are close together and speak in low voices.

TREGAY. You've told no one else what Strood was really after?

FRANKS. Not a soul.

TREGAY. Any proof.

FRANKS. My word of honour.

TREGAY. Not legal tender, Clement.

FRANKS. Isn't a man's word believed in the City?

TREGAY. It has been known.

FRANKS. I must have my name cleared of this, Roger. In my report there wasn't a shred of hope that Strood could ever reach those diamonds. What am I to say to poor Lockyer's people, and to Collie's, now? What am I to do?

TREGAY. Keep your head, my boy.

While he is speaking BASTAPLE'S *door is opened, and he comes in.*

BASTAPLE. Good evening, gentlemen.

They turn abruptly. TREGAY *reserved, ironic.* FRANKS *tense and quivering.*

I've read your report, Dr. Franks. Terrible, that forest! I was just sending round to you about this news in the papers.

FRANKS. I came about that.

BASTAPLE. I thought you unduly pessimistic the other day.

FRANKS. You believe it?

TREGAY. Striking coincidence, Mr. Bastaple.

BASTAPLE. How do you mean?

TREGAY. On Monday my cousin reports Strood's objective; on Thursday comes the news that he has reached it.

BASTAPLE. You think something let fall by Dr. Franks has inspired the imagination of some journalist?

FRANKS. I've let nothing fall.

BASTAPLE. [*Shrugging his shoulders*] How about Mr. Tregay——? Walls have ears, Dr. Franks.

FRANKS. [*Drawing a cutting from his pocket*] "On behalf of South African Concessions?" How could I have said that? I've been away six years—didn't even know there was such a concern.

BASTAPLE. Ever heard of Robert Beton?

FRANKS. Yes, from Strood.

BASTAPLE. Robert Beton *is* South African Concessions. Beton picked him for this trip.

FRANKS. [*Flustered*] Yes; but I—I've never spoken of Beton.

BASTAPLE. Well! It looks more and more as if the news were true. We must try and verify it, Dr. Franks.

TREGAY. How about beginning in this office?

BASTAPLE. The report, you mean? . . . Hasn't been out of my personal possession, Mr. Tregay. [*He takes it from his breast pocket*] And since I saw Dr. Franks, I've been away from town until an hour ago.

TREGAY. Walls have ears, Mr. Bastaple.

BASTAPLE. Not these walls, gentlemen, or a good many projects would have gone agley.

FRANKS. [*Excitedly*] There's a wild buying of shares, they tell me. See this headline: "Another De Beers."

BASTAPLE. Let's look at that wording. [*Reading the cutting*] "Another De Beers is reported to have been discovered on behalf of South African Concessions, by the explorer John Strood, who

last autumn penetrated the Congo region from the Albert Edward Nyanza." Been down to the office of that journal?

FRANKS. Yes, and to others. The only answer I get is that it comes from a reliable source.

BASTAPLE. The craze for sensation—it *may* be a canard.

TREGAY. *If* so, how comes it they pitched on Strood's *real* objective?

BASTAPLE. [*Shrugging*] Exactly! how?

FRANKS. People are losing and making fortunes on the strength of this report. I don't believe it; I want my name cleared of it.

BASTAPLE. What are you going to do, then?

FRANKS. Disclaim any connection, in the papers, warn people against the report.

FARRELL *appears from his room, with evening papers in his hand. He puts them down on the little table; then hands* BASTAPLE *a slip of paper, and goes out.*

BASTAPLE. [*After a glance at the slip of paper, smiles; then, curling it up in his hand, spreads an evening journal*] Let's see if there's anything fresh about it. [*Reading to himself*] Um! It says here: "From a Portuguese source." That absolves you, Dr. Franks.

FRANKS. [*Startled*] Portuguese! If it's true, after all!

BASTAPLE. Why not? I'm buying on the strength of it. Still, send that denial of your responsibility.

TREGAY. At once, Clement, if it's to be in to-morrow's press.

FRANKS. Could I write it quietly in there?

[*He points to the door, Right.*

BASTAPLE. Certainly. You'll find everything.

FRANKS. Thanks.

[*He goes out.*

TREGAY. Might I have a look at that bit of paper in your left hand?

BASTAPLE. [*Involuntarily closing his hand*] I beg your pardon!

TREGAY. This is a ramp, Mr. Bastaple.

BASTAPLE. [*Slowly*] Are you unwell, sir?

TREGAY. Who financed the Strood expedition? You! Why? Because you wanted coolie labour to boost your shares with. Coolie labour fell down two days ago,

[BASTAPLE *makes a gesture of impatience.*

and you were in deep—or you'd never have pulled out ten thousand pounds last autumn for a slave-trade story. What then? Shares falling—time pressing; you know why, and so do I. Old Kruger—war coming. And so—you whispered "diamonds," and someone heard you, and—

[*Again* BASTAPLE *makes a movement.*

Well! Why not? You win instead of losing—someone loses instead of winning. And you have made ——? Do show me that bit of paper!

BASTAPLE. This is amusing.

TREGAY. Ah! Then, may I have a look?

BASTAPLE. You may be damned!

He takes a cigar and lights it from the little flame burning beside his cigar box.

TREGAY. [*Staring at him*] Self for self and devil take the hindmost—fine motto, Mr. Bastaple.

BASTAPLE. Confound your impudence. What business have you——?

TREGAY. My cousin is not exactly at home in this city of yours, poor devil.

BASTAPLE. You are offensive, sir.

TREGAY. I've seen your sort at work too often, stalking your game, mousing after the oof-bird. The cat force!

BASTAPLE. Romanticism! Ha!

While he speaks, FRANKS *has returned and stands amazed.*

TREGAY. Clement, there's some plain speaking going on. This rumour's a fake.

BASTAPLE. I have a witness now, sir.

TREGAY. [*Looking at his watch*] The Stock Exchange has closed. If you want to know what he's made out of this, ask him to let you see the bit of paper in his left hand. Let's take it from him! [*He steps forward.*

BASTAPLE. [*Putting his hand near the flame*] You have the advantage of me, in age and numbers, gentlemen!

[*The word brings* TREGAY *to a standstill.*

FRANKS. You say *he* issued that report?

TREGAY. Or got it issued.

FRANKS. To make money! [*With sudden passion*] By God! You people who sit here—if I

had you in the forest, at the tail of a caravan, covered with sores, with shrunken stomachs, and your ribs sticking out of you! That'd teach you not to juggle with lives!

BASTAPLE. [*Icily*] Dr. Franks, I judged from your report that your heart is better than your head. Take your romantic friend here away, and ask him quietly on what evidence he bases his fantastic accusation, and he will have to tell you "On none!" Do you understand me? None! Ask him to get you some, if he can. Beating the air is not an occupation for serious men. Go away!

TREGAY. Not so fast! You went down to the newspapers, Clement. So did I. You got nothing—you don't know the ropes. I do, and I got this. [*He takes a bit of paper from his pocket and reads*] "John Strood, English explorer for South African Concessions, discovered diamond fields Kasai, Congo Territory, March last, signed Central Press Agency, Lisbon."

FRANKS. But that sounds——

[BASTAPLE *is standing very attentive.*

TREGAY. Too slick, my boy. They gave me this at five o'clock yesterday. I wired off to a friend at Lisbon—and got this answer just before you came to see me. [*Reading*] "Press Agency Lisbon, no knowledge of message, cannot trace sender." [*He shows it to* FRANKS] What do you say to that, Mr. Bastaple?

[BASTAPLE *presses the bell.*

Cherchez l'homme—Who profits by this report?

BASTAPLE. Precisely! . . . Go and make your enquiries on the Stock Exchange. You will find that since this report appeared I have bought fifteen thousand shares and sold none. You two owe your immunity from an action to the fact that Dr. Franks has suffered what he has. [FARRELL *has appeared in the doorway*] Farrell, show these people out.

TREGAY. Hold on!

FARRELL *closes the door, and* BASTAPLE, *who is moving towards his inner sanctum, stops.*

Mr. Farrell, you knew of Strood's ultimate destination.

FARRELL. [*Hesitating*] N—no, sir—unless you—you mean——

[*His finger takes the direction of the floor.*

TREGAY. For once I'm not joking in bad taste. After Dr. Franks left last Monday, Mr. Bastaple told you.

FARRELL. [*Looking at* BASTAPLE] Did you, sir? I—I don't seem——

BASTAPLE. You must remember whether I did or not.

FARRELL. [*Closing up*] Certainly, sir; you did not.

TREGAY. Mr. Farrell, be careful.

FARRELL. I am naturally careful, sir.

TREGAY. Will you swear he didn't tell you?

BASTAPLE. This is not a Court of Law.

TREGAY. No; but you may find yourself in one.

BASTAPLE. And you, sir.

TREGAY. [*To* FARRELL] I say you knew that Strood was after those diamonds in the Kasai. I further say that on Wednesday night, after the General Meeting, when coolie labour was defeated, you wired in cipher to Lisbon instructing your agent there to send this report about Strood. Look at it!

[*He thrusts it before* FARRELL'S *eyes.*

While FARRELL *is reading, all three men are staring hard at him.* FARRELL *finishes reading and looks up.*

FARRELL. I certainly did not.

TREGAY. Pardon me if I've underrated the astuteness of your methods, but somehow you got that message sent. Look at *this:* "Press Agency Lisbon no knowledge—cannot trace sender." [*He shows* FARRELL *the telegram*] Bring an action for slander if you didn't rig that report.

FARRELL. You're talking wild, sir.

TREGAY. [*Patting his pocket*] That bit of paper you brought in just now? What a nice round figure, isn't it?

Putting his hand in his pocket, bringing it out as if with the paper in it, and looking at the inside of his hand.

FARRELL. [*After a moment of suspense*] Yes, sir, what *is* the—the amount?

BASTAPLE. Your bluff called. Ha! My patience is exhausted. [*Opening the door into his inner sanctum*] Farrell.

[*He goes out, followed by* FARRELL.

TREGAY. There goes a tiger. But he's right.

Clement; we shall never bring it home to him. *His* pads leave no track.

FRANKS. [*As if to himself*] "It's a bad world, master, and you have lost your way in it." Just to make money!

TREGAY. Your own by tooth and claw, my boy. Forest law. [*He takes* FRANKS's *arm*] Come on!

The door of the inner sanctum has been re-opened, and FARRELL *stands there.*

[*Regarding him steadily*] What about that action, Mr. Farrell? You've got two witnesses.

FARRELL. I also have a wife and children. I don't go in for luxuries.

TREGAY. He might pay you better for his dirty work.

FARRELL. [*With heat*] Whet your tongue on me; but keep it off *him*, please!

TREGAY. By Jove, Mr. Farrell, there's sand in you. Tell me, isn't he ever ashamed of himself?

FARRELL. No more than you, sir.

TREGAY. [*With a shrug*] Come along, Clement.

[*They go out, followed by the gaze of* FARRELL. *As the door is shut,* BASTAPLE *comes from the inner sanctum, still smoking his cigar. He seats himself and opens a drawer of the little table.*

FARRELL. [*Nervously*] Mr. Tregay——

BASTAPLE. [*Stopping him with a gesture and taking a cheque-book from a drawer, writes*] For you. On my account with Buenos Aires. Ten per cent on [*uncrisping his left hand to read from the scrap*

of paper in it] two hundred and five thousand pounds.

He finishes the cheque and hands it to FARRELL.

FARRELL. [*Open-mouthed*] Sir!

BASTAPLE. [*Stopping his attempt to speak, with a little motion of his hand*] Increase my charities this year. Double them.

FARRELL. [*Almost in a whisper*] Yes, sir, with—with pleasure. Of course—Strood *may* have, sir, mayn't he?

BASTAPLE *turns his face towards him, and slowly smiles. Unable to bear that sardonic grin,* FARRELL *curls away to the door and goes out.* BASTAPLE *puts the piece of paper to the little spirit flame and watches it burn. Then, square to the room, takes his cigar from his mouth and emits a great puff of smoke. His face has on it a half-smile, and he stretches himself with a sigh of satisfaction, his fingers spreading and crisping unconsciously, like the claws of a cat.*

CURTAIN.

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